

# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GERMANS

by

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*With Two Maps*

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*By the Same Author*

THREE MEN TRIED. . . , Briand, Strosemann, Austen Chamberlain and the making of the Locarno Treaty.

EXIT PRUSSIA. A Plan for Europe.

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TO THE HON. HAROLD NICOLSON, M.P.,  
WHO WHILE RECORDING HISTORY TAKES A  
SHARE IN MAKING IT



#### GERMANY'S TRIBAL COMPOSITION

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I Austrians (Alpine<br>Bavarians)  | VI Thuringians and<br>Saxons        |
| II Bavarians                       | VII Westphalians (Anglo-<br>Saxons) |
| III Swabians (with<br>Alemannians) | VIII Hanoverians (Anglo-<br>Saxons) |
| IV Franks                          | IX Frisians                         |
| V Hessians                         |                                     |

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## INTRODUCTION

THERE are many English books on German history. Some of them enjoy an international reputation and could scarcely be surpassed as fair-minded and acute expositions of a most complicated subject—the development of the greatest central European power over two thousand years. Most of them, with good reason, build up their story round the rise, the heyday and the disappearance of rulers and dynasties, recording the decisive battles they fought, the alliances, matrimonial and other, they concluded, the lands they won or lost and the treaties they signed. As far as the author of this little book has been able to discover, all of them aim at giving either a complete history of Germany or an exhaustive account of some particular period of it; in either case the result is a bulky work, often running to several volumes.

This brief outline of German development has quite a different purpose. It is a history of the Germans, not of Germany, and it lays no claim to being an exhaustive account. It does not concern itself with the dates of birth, accession to the throne, and death of individual German rulers, or with all the battles and campaigns fought by their mercenaries. Rather it attempts to show the state of civilisation,



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the ways of living, thinking and acting of the German people at every important epoch in the development and records the facts, personalities and other matters which take pride of place in modern histories, only in so far as they are necessary for the understanding of that development.

It was a colourful, dramatic, often tragic history that ultimately led to Hitlerism and to a deliberate attack upon the whole of western Christian civilization. An author born and bred in Germany is perhaps better qualified than any foreigner, however objective his outlook, to discern the essential traits of the German character and follow them through the centuries.

The new Nazi gospel of Race as the source of development, national and general, prompts one to consider the German people from the side of the inherited, indelible characteristics. This little book has been written during the Second Great War under difficult conditions in which the author had all leisure to meditate upon the curious fate of a Liberal, a democrat and a European born and bred within the boundaries of Germany, but without reference books and no access to libraries. It must be left to the reader's judgment whether his attempt at a strictly objective and truthful delineation of the German character through the centuries has been successful. If it is so in any degree, it should be of use to all those in whom the fateful events of these days

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have produced a desire for a complete, even if necessarily sketchy, picture of that singular, perhaps ultimately incomprehensible people that has again and again made itself responsible for worldwide disaster.

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September 1940



SAVAGES *VERSUS* CIVILISATION

LIKE all great peoples the Germans are very proud of their national tradition. That tradition, sometimes neglected, sometimes emphasised, sometimes entirely forgotten, was raised to the status of a religion when National Socialism took command. Yet, during the whole period in which the nations of antiquity, Babylon and Assyria, Greece, Egypt and Rome, flourished, nothing like a German nation existed. Until the time of Christ and for some while after, Central Europe was inhabited by savage tribes best comparable with the negro tribes of our day. Their languages were of small range ; they did not possess writing (although modern Germans claim the runic characters, obviously a simpler variant of the Greek alphabet, as an invention of their forefathers) ; their conduct was cruel and primitive, and their customs and ways of living, until they came into contact with Mediterranean civilisation, scarcely above those of the aborigines of the Dark Continent.

Nothing is known of their history until the year 115 B.C., when the Cimbri and Teutones, coming

from Jutland and the area north-east of the Elbe, began to push southwards and to invade the country subsequently known as Bohemia, and the Carinthia, Styria and other outposts of the Roman Empire north of the Alps. Together with other Teutonic and Celtic tribes previously conquered they defeated a Roman army at Noreia in 113 and again in 109 and 105—the first Teutonic invasion of Italy, to be followed by many more in the course of two thousand years. Roman authors describe how these wild tribes formed rectangular barricades of their waggons and how their women and children continued the fight when their men had been slain, until they too were destroyed in order to avoid captivity, threw themselves upon the spears and swords of the enemy. At first the appearance of these wild and ruthless invaders from the mysterious northern countries was a great shock to the proud Roman masters of the Mediterranean world. The physical strength, the endurance, the warlike character of these savages clad in skins and wearing the heads of bears, buffaloes and other animals as headgear, and athletic accomplishments like those of their leader, Teutoboch, a giant who was said to be able to jump over four or six horses, deeply impressed a nation already softened by civilisation.

The Romans managed, however, to prevail by the greater numbers and the unyielding bravery

the Germans by using their superior intelligence. Attacking early in the morning, so that the Cimbri were half blinded by the sun and the dust of a burning hot summer day, the Roman general Marius destroyed or captured the whole people of the Cimbri in 101 B.C., after having defeated the Teutones a year before at Aix in Provence. The northern danger was averted for about forty years, until the Suabian king Ariovistus penetrated into what is to-day the heart of France. He preceded Hitler by, roughly, two thousand years; but the tribes he subjected, especially the Sequani, of whom the river Seine reminds us, were not yet latinised, and can be considered as precursors of the French only in a very vague sense. Even so the Romans, who had a highly developed political sense, could not tolerate the occupation of one of their most important outposts of empire by foreign savages, and as soon as Julius Cæsar was appointed to the command of Gaul (i.e., Northern Italy and Provence) he set himself the task of driving back the Teutonic tribes, the Suevi, Helvetii and others, who had begun to settle on Gallic soil.

He has put on record his conference with Ariovistus—a rare instance in ancient warfare—in order to prove the faithlessness of his German adversary. After both commanders had agreed upon meeting on a hill between their entrenched camps, unarmed and with but a few retainers, Ariovistus made an

unsuccessful attempt to capture or kill Cæsar. The consequence was a terrific battle during which the Suevi—or Suabians—and their allies were completely routed and destroyed. That battle near the river Thurn, not far from the modern Besançon, took place on 10 September, 58 B.C.; it has so often been claimed to rank as a turning-point of history. For it eliminated the German tribes from Gallic soil for no less than five and a half centuries, until Chlothevich (Clovis), king of the Franks, conquered what was later to be France; and permitted the evolution of a Celto-Latin culture that, as French civilisation, was to illuminate the world for more than a thousand years. It is more than doubtful whether anything like that culture could have arisen under German domination; for at that time, at least, the Germans were rough barbarians who tortured their prisoners and even hostages in the most horrible fashion.

Their standard at that time may be compared with that of the pre-Homeric Greeks about a thousand years earlier, or of the Romans before the foundation of their city. They practised human sacrifice, and (despite German claims about the high national morality) polygamy was general, at least among noble or wealthier members of the community. They were dirty, drunkards, gamblers, unscrupulously putting to the hazard of the die their primitive houses, their slaves, their wives and children, their horses, and even their own freedom.

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They were cruel and quarrelsome. Incest, bigamy and other sexual perversities were not considered to be crimes; murder could be bought off by paying *Wergeld* to the tribal ruler or the community. They punished their slaves in the most brutal way, whipping or emasculating them, and their inter-tribal quarrels were so interminable that 'querelles Allemandes' became a current French phrase for senseless rows. They united only in a temporary and superficial fashion with the object of waging war abroad and of electing a king or 'duke' (leader) for that purpose. Cæsar reports that 'the greatest distinction a tribe can have is to be surrounded by as wide a belt as possible of waste and desert land. They regard it as a tribute to their valour that neighbouring peoples should be dispossessed and should retreat before them, and that no one should venture to settle in their vicinity. . . .'

For their physical aspect we have mainly to rely on Roman and Greek writers such as Tacitus, Strabo, Sextus Empiricus and others. Tacitus who set out to contrast what he considered the depravity of his countrymen with the primitive but healthy and morally sounder ways of living of the northern savages—the Gog and Magog peoples of the Bible—describes the Germans as follows: 'They have defiant blue eyes, reddish hair, frames bulky and possessing strength only for spasmodic effort, with no corresponding power of standing up



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to toil and hard work. They have never accustomed themselves to bear thirst or heat even in the smallest degree. . . . They go naked or lightly clad with a short cloak. . . . To drink all through the day and far into the night is a disgrace to no one. Their quarrels, as might be expected among drunken men, are frequent and are seldom fought out with mere wrangling, but more often with bloodshed and wounds.' In describing their passion for games of hazard the Roman historian calls it 'stubbornness a perverse practice; they themselves call it honour. Of their lust for plunder and fighting he says that 'it seems to them dull and insipid to acquire by the sweat of their brow what can be won by bloodshed and of the famous Teutonic loyalty he says 'Their leaders fight for victory, the followers fight for their leader. . . .'

While, in the past two thousand years, the primitive ways of the Germans have given place to extremely up-to-date technical civilisation, it seems that certain fundamental traits of the national character have prevailed over all supervening influences such as Christianity, knightly or humanistic education, acquisition of wealth and intercourse with other peoples. Certain customs, for instance, like the enforced duelling of students, remind one strangely of the habits of their savage ancestors. The Chatti, an important tribe, like the Red Indians of yore used to take a vow by which they let the

hair and beard grow and wore iron rings until such time as they found an opportunity to redeem their pledge by slaying an enemy. A perversion which, rightly or wrongly, has been attributed to many modern rulers of Germany and their courts must have been fairly common among the simple savages of Cæsar's day: Sextus Empiricus reports that pederasty was very popular and was not considered as shameful, while Tacitus on the other hand tells us that those guilty of it were condemned to be buried alive in swamps. Superstition too—as is quite natural among primitive peoples—was rife. Priestesses used to predict the favourable time for a battle from the intestines of prisoners sacrificed for that purpose. All in all, the ancient Germans appear to have been a rather unpleasant lot; and their history, as far as foreign authors, oral tradition, bardic songs and other sources have preserved it, is full of unsavoury, cruel, brutal and perfidious deeds.

Yet they too have their heroes, the most outstanding of whom is Arminius, or Hermann, the Cheruscan, whose life-story deserves a page to itself. Cæsar had twice crossed the river Rhine, Germany's natural frontier, in 55 and 53 B.C.; Tiberius had crossed the Alps and reached the Danube, and about the time when in far-away Palestine Jesus Christ was born, two Roman provinces were established on German soil, later called the *Agri Decumati* and fortified by a system of castles and a long wall the remains

of which to this day yield interesting finds. As the German tribes had no towns or even villages of importance, it was then that the foundations of many famous German cities were laid: Trèves, Cologne, Mayence, Augsburg, Regensburg and Vienna, among others, owe their origin to the fortified military settlements established by Roman generals guarding the outposts of their Empire. A certain degree of neighbourly relations was reached between Latin and German inhabitants of occupied and bordering territories when the youthful leader of the Cherusci, a tribe living approximately within the area later called Westphalia, took service with the Roman army. Like Maroboduus king of the Marcomanni, between the rivers Elbe and Vistula, he had distinguished himself and been made a Roman knight and citizen. He had learned the secrets of political craft and, although but twenty-six years of age when he succeeded his father as ruler of his tribe, he knew how to practise deceit and diplomacy. Quintilius Varus, appointed governor of the German provinces by the Emperor Augustus, trusted him and frequently took part in drinking bouts such as the Germans liked.

His own people, however, were less confiding in Arminius, and Segestes, his father-in-law, whom he had deeply offended by eloping with Thusnelda his daughter, who had been promised to another ruler, was his sworn enemy. He tried to war

Varus against Arminius and a cunning plot of his, but was no more successful in doing so than Flavius, Arminius's own brother, who held the rank of a captain in the legions of Varus. By denouncing a revolt in a northern part of the country Arminius enticed Varus with his three legions into the Teutoburg mountains, a wild, swampy and densely wooded area along the river Weser. There, suddenly deserting his Roman 'friend,' Arminius led the tribes allied with his own to a sudden attack one rainy day in the autumn of 9 A.D., and completely destroyed the Roman army. Varus committed suicide on the battlefield; surviving soldiers were made slaves and officers were sacrificed to the sinister Teutonic gods in their sacred groves. Subsequently the farthest Roman outpost, the fortress Aliso, was stormed. Augustus, when he learned of the defeat of his strongest colonial army, fell into despair, exclaiming, 'Varus, Varus, give me back my legions,' and indeed it looked for a moment as if the mighty Roman Empire were really menaced with invasion and perhaps destruction by the barbarian hordes from the north.

But they waited for seven years before doing anything to exploit their crushing victory, and meanwhile the power of Rome recovered from the shock. Quarrelling as usual among themselves, the German leaders were unable to build up a nation, or even an alliance, of permanent quality. Maro-

boduus, the mighty king who by now ruled over an area stretching from the lower Elbe deep into the Styrian Alps, was jealous of his younger rival's fame and refused to join forces with him when, as a token of his good faith, Arminius sent him the head of Varus. Thus, when Germanicus, late in 14 A.D., advanced into the country of the Chatti, southern neighbours of the Cherusans, Arminius found himself hard pressed and unable even to protect his wife, whom Segestes handed over to the enemy shortly before she gave birth to Arminius's only son. She was taken to Rome and forced to march in Germanicus's triumphal procession, and was afterwards held in Ravenna where King Maroboduus, too, after being defeated by Arminius in a murderous fratricidal war, ended his days in exile. Thumelicus, son of Arminius born in captivity, met his death as a gladiator. Arminius himself, extolled to this day by the Germans as a national hero and the first unifier of his people, came to no better end. For a long time jealous chieftains tried to make away with him by treachery and murder; one of them even made an offer to the Roman Senate to poison him if he were provided with the necessary drugs—an offer that Tiberius haughtily refused. Finally, in 20 A.D. he was assassinated by a group of his own closest followers. The people revenged his death by a civil war in which the whole Cheruscan nobility was exterminated; Italicus, son of Arminius's

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latinised brother Flavus, was made the hero's successor, but soon disappears, together with his tribe, from the pages of history.

For the next three and a half centuries such account of Germany as history gives is one long story of bloodshed, internecine feuds, tribal unrest and migrations—a dark age full of ignorance, poverty and superstition, with but few outstanding names and deeds. The Christian faith, which began to make headway everywhere else, was unknown to these still half-savage tribes. Their heathen gods demanded human sacrifice and indulged in incestuous love-affairs ; they were pictured as fighting among themselves, betraying and assassinating each other or struggling with giants. They were supposed to be overshadowed by the menace of a terrible twilight when even they would have to die and the world would end in flames. Wotan or Odin, supreme amongst them, is a splenetic, one-eyed old man ; Baldur, the fair-haired god of light, falls to the poisonous arrow of mistletoe shot by the Master of the nether world. In short, the Teutonic Valhalla, the Germans' Olympus, presents a more or less correct picture of the earthly life of its believers and is hardly inspiring, except to bravery in battle which is rewarded by a prompt transfer of the dead hero to Valhalla by the Valkyries, Wotan's handmaidens, who, lingering above the battlefield, direct the spear-throws and carry the



victims away on their divine horses. Valhalla itself was conceived by Nordic believers as a large banqueting-hall where meth, an alcoholic brew made of fermented millet and honey, could be had for the asking, where songs and stories were heard, and where everyone boasted of his earthly prowess.

The esteem in which the Romans held their savage northern neighbours was based exclusively upon their military qualities. They fought them for centuries, with some setbacks at first; but between 50 and 100 A.D., Roman legions advanced into the territories of the Frisians and Batavians, the tribes of the northern coast. Having established their mastery, they employed these Teutonic fighters in their widespread colonial wars, thus laying the foundations of a mercenary system characteristic of Germany all through the Middle Ages. The great mistake of the Roman conquerors was to entrust more and more of the task of keeping guard along the German border itself, and the control of the 'tithe-land'—the *Agri Decumati*—to such German auxiliaries. The marvellous double wall which finally stretched from the Firth of Forth in far away Britain along the right bank of the Rhine and from there along the Danube perhaps as far as Rumania, became useless as soon as those against whom it was erected were made masters of its strongholds. As soon as there was a sufficient cause to set these half-tamed populations in motion, the

were bound to turn to the south and west, from which a warmer sun, more fertile soils and rich booty beckoned to them.

That cause presented itself in a southward thrust by the strong Nordic tribe of the Goths. It is unknown whether famine or epidemics urged them to leave their territories around the mouth of the Vistula and push in the direction of the Black Sea, but it was their migration that set all the eastern tribes in motion, and forced others to pour like locusts into the Danubian and Alpine countries and, in the middle of the second century, to cross the Alps and attack Aquileia—near the later Venice—the main trading post of the Romans with the Eastern world. Repulsed with great effort and sacrifice, German tribes (such as the Marcomanni and Suevi) appeared again a century later, attacked Ravenna and menaced even Rome around 265 A.D. simultaneously with a general crossing of the Rhine by the Teutonic hordes of the Alemanni, Burgundians and Franks. The power of resistance of the Roman Empire was declining. On many occasions it was obliged to compromise with the barbarians, to grant them colonial land on what had been Gallic soil, because dynastic conflicts at home or political and personal feuds made Rome's leaders forget the larger interests of the Empire. Usurpers or would-be usurpers of the imperial diadem of Augustus did not even shrink from calling on German tribal

leaders for help: for instance, when Marcus Constantius asked for the backing of the Alemanni, who at once overflowed the fertile land of Gaul.

Constantius's successor, Julian, tried to stem the tide. Near the modern Strassburg, in 357 A.D., he attacked 35,000 German tribesmen with 55,000 well-trained and equipped Roman soldiers and, after a terrific battle in which German auxiliaries in the Roman Legions decided the issue, completely routed and destroyed the Alemanni, thousands of whom were drowned when trying to retreat across the Rhine. That was the last successful effort to preserve the Roman Empire, to avert its fate and prevent the Germans from gaining the dominant position in European history.

## II

357-814 A.D.

### THE BIRTH OF A GERMAN PEOPLE

THE close and permanent contact, in war and peace, between German tribes and Roman 'colonists' makes it extremely hard to distinguish between cause and effect. According to the personal point of view of the individual historian, the decline of Rome is attributed either to the impact of barbarians quipped with the means of warfare and trained in strategy and politics by the Romans themselves, or to internal unrest and demoralisation which invited the barbarians and paved the way to the gates of the City which had ruled the world. In any case it is certain that the later Roman emperors relied more and more upon German generals and German prætorians and thus furnished them opportunities of grasping power for themselves. About 400 A.D. it was Stilicho, a Vandal, who defended the rule of Honorius against other German attackers; in 476 Odovacar (Odoacer), ruler of the Rugian tribe, was made King of Italy under the titular suzerainty of the Roman Emperor whose seat of government was then in Constantinople.

Odovacar was deposed and was succeeded, and subsequently murdered, by Theodoric, King of the

Ostrogoths. Verona and Ravenna, where that ruler—glorified later on by German myths though hardly less of an assassin, profligate and drunkard than his contemporaries—set up his court, overshadowed ancient Rome. Theodoric created an administration in which Gothic and Roman executive and legislative worked side by side, stabilised the decaying financial system of his kingdom and established a certain degree of religious toleration, which embraced the Jews. He extended his power over other Teutonic realms in Gaul and Germany where parricidal and fratricidal feuds, incest, polygamy and other vices created permanent enmity between the ruling families. Yet, after his death in 526, his own family did not escape that fate: his grandson and successor was dethroned as a drunkard, his daughter was murdered by his nephew and joint ruler with her, and the Gothic kingdom went down under the hammer strokes of Byzantine generals such as Belisarius and Narses.

In German legend Theodoric's personality merged with that of other heroes and kings. The most famous of the sagas, the *Song of the Nibelung*, mentions him as a friend and guest of Attila, King of the Huns, and as a witness of the last tragic episode when Krimhild, widow of Siegfried and wife of Attila, slays her own brother Gunther together with all the Burgundian princes and knights in the rulers' burning banquet-hall. Yet it was

before the birth of Theodoric that Gunther or Gunthahari ruled at Worms, on the upper Rhine, about 410, and that Attila died in 452 or 453. Much of the gruesome story—preserved by bardic songs and not written down in its present form till the fourteenth century—is probably derived from Merovingian history which starts with the sixth century. It is hardly worth while to record the names of these Frankish rulers: one of them, Chlotar, had all his relatives murdered; another, Fredegundis, induced her lover to assassinate his wife and his brother. A third queen, Brunhild, was torn to pieces by four horses after having killed ten other rulers. Dagger and poison wrought havoc among the ruling families while, astonishingly enough, the primitive and treacherous people of the Franks prospered and overwhelmed the two Gothic patrimonies—that of the Visigoths in Spain and southern France, like that of the Vandals in northern Africa, having rapidly decayed under the influence of tribal, dynastic and religious feuds; both their ruling houses had adopted Arian Christianity and oppressed Catholics, or, alternatively, had gone over to Catholicism and been attacked by Arians and advancing Mahometans alike.

The first Frankish rulers were heathens like their wild tribes. Clovis, chieftain of the Salian Franks, after uniting all the other Frankish tribes between 485 and 491, attacked the Alemanni and in a

moment of grave danger during the battle of Tolbiac, near Strassburg, called on Christ to succor him. After his victory he accepted the faith of Rome for himself and his people and subsequently conquered a large part of what later became France and western Germany. His successors continued to extend their inheritance, conquering Bavaria, invading Italy and plundering Rome, splitting their realm and reuniting it, fighting their own ambitious vassals and nobles, and committing numerous murders of close relatives which were evidently obligatory in that dynasty. More and more the *Major-domo* of the king, a sort of *Le Chamberlain*, Attorney-General and Field-Marshal combined, gained the real power while the ruling king or queen was engaged in the usual sanguinary pastime. In 638 the real power passed to Pepin the Old, Mayor of Austrasia, the eastern, German part of the Frankish Empire, and his son, Grimoald, created for his nominal king and his successors the iron title of *roi fainéant*—the king with nothing to do.

Charles Martel, the Hammer, illegitimate son of another Pepin, was to become the greatest of the Mayors of the Palace. He reunited the Merovingian realm, fought the Saxons and Frisians in the north of Germany, the Bavarians in the south and finally, vanquished the Arabs who, after conquering Spain, had advanced as far as Poitiers in the heart of France. His power became such that he did

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bother to have another of the *fainéant* kings elected during the last four years of his rule : to all intents and purposes he was already Emperor of a great new realm covering the now most important parts of what had once been the Roman Empire. He avoured missionary work among the heathen Germans, yet strictly controlled the activities of the Church. Boniface, the apostle to the Germans, an Irish monk, was made Bishop of Germany beyond the Rhine under Charles, and with the cutting down of Wotan's holy oak near Fritzlar, in Hesse, brought to a sudden end that period of German history which modern political propaganda strying hard to glorify as the source of all specifically Teutonic virtues and traditions, but which was in fact a Dark Age unsurpassed in cruelty, superstition, immorality and nearly every variety of vice by that of any other people. If the German savages of pre-Christian days had any inborn virtues—and that of loyalty above all is claimed for them—such proofs of it as have been preserved by word of mouth only (there are no written documents dating back to pre-Christian times) are astonishingly negative. Most of their heroes die by treachery, assassination, or poison ; their womenfolk are betrayed, trapped into marriage—as Brunhild, the Valkyrie, is by Gunther aided by Siegfried under his cap of invisibility, in the Nibelung saga—or given up to bigamous or licentious intrigues. Their gods are repre-



sented as open to bribes, as quarrelling and fighting among themselves and as mortal in the widest sense of that word. The undoubted bravery of the Teutonic tribesmen appears to be due to ignorance and superstition, enhanced by much the same method that later on Mahomet employed to make his followers invincible: namely, the promise of paradise attainable only by death on the battlefield, a paradise embodying somewhat grossly the dream of a glutton, a drunkard and a libertine.

Even though a few names, such as Arminius, Theodoric, Gaiseric the Vandal or Alaric the Visigoth who in his turn sacked Rome, have been preserved, there was no organised German nation or development before Christianity and the teaching of the monks began to overcome gross darkness, intellectually, morally and materially. Schools such as those which were opened all over the country by the fighting Irish monks, from the time when St. Columba and St. Gallus started their missionary work about the year 600, were for a long time the only beacons in the Dark Age, during which the high Mediterranean civilisation which had previously spread with the marching legions of Rome had given way to savagery and ignorance. A certain level of amenity, even in far-away Germany, had again been replaced by mud and wattle; excellent roads had fallen into disuse and the dung-heap inside the peasant hut, which the German barbarians had used as a sleeping-place,

a cache for their food because of its warmth, had re-appeared. It needed Anglo-Saxon scholars like Alcuin and his Irish contemporary Boniface to bring forth such capacities as were latent in the vast plains between Rhine and Elbe, between the North Sea and the Alps.

Charles Martel had paved the way. His son Carolus Magnus—Charlemagne—whom Germans and French alike claim as their greatest ruler, probably did not think of himself as the successor either of Arminius or of Vercingetorix, as either a Teutonic or a Gaulish ruler. Both Gaul and the German provinces were to him parts of the Roman Empire, the 'Imperium Mundi,' which, by virtue of the Frankish inheritance, he held as it were in trust. True, he disposed in a somewhat liberal way of the territories of that Empire, granting to the Pope the 'Patrimonium Petri' as an Ecclesiastical State, confiscating—after a war with Desiderius, King of the Langobards and his own father-in-law through one of his frequent marriages—the latter's wealthy domains in northern Italy and crowning himself with the iron crown of the Langobards. On the other hand he fortified and pacified the realm and set up an organisation exploiting as perfectly as possible the political experience of his Roman predecessors. His most powerful adversaries were the Saxon tribes, loosely united under their chief Widukind (Witiking). After three sanguinary

expeditions, between 772 and 780, Charles secured the Saxons' submission: Widukind was baptised; Attigny in Champagne, and his pugnacious people were forcibly converted to the Christian creed and partly transplanted into Frankish territories, where to this day a number of towns and villages bear names reminding us of the Saxon settlers. The Saxon migrations to Britain obviously gained strong impulse from this subjugation of a proud race, thousands of whom had been beheaded by Charles at Verden after a revolt in 782. Twelve centuries later National Socialism represented the Pagan rebels against Charles's organised state as the sanctified martyrs of Germanism slain by Judaism in the disguise of the Christian Church.

Charles fought other frontier tribes as well: he subjugated the Bavarians, the Avars in what was Hungary, the Norsemen who raided his coast, and the personal enemies of the Pope, Leo III, with a view of his many obligations to the Frankish ruler, crowned him Emperor during mass at St. Peter's on Christmas Day 800 A.D. This act marked the foundation of the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,' although the name itself was not established until, one and a half centuries later, Charlemagne was crowned in Rome. Although Charles's effort to establish a perfect centralised organisation and to spread learning and religion was not entirely successful, and though many

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his local counts failed to give satisfaction, and his travelling courts to dispense equal justice, he raised the level of civilisation and ended the Dark Age that had prevailed for more than three hundred years all over central and western Europe. At the same time, with his many expeditions into Italy he initiated a period of strife that was to overshadow the whole of medieval history and to give German political life a twist that prevented internal consolidation. The *Drang nach Süden*, if not yet its counterpart, the *Drang nach Osten*, established itself under Charlemagne's influence. The countries of a sunnier climate and a more fertile soil became the permanent objects of German yearning, and his example served as the pretext for endless predatory expeditions and sanguinary wars. German romanticism fed on his deeds, his exchange of embassies with distant potentates such as Haroun-al-Rashid, Caliph of Baghdad, his fight against the Spanish Saracens, during which Roland, Count of the Breton March, fell and became a German as well as a French mythical hero, statues of whom adorn to this day numerous German town-halls and law-courts.

To what low level the arts had by then sunk in the northern countries, in spite of the beautiful Greek and Roman models ready to hand, appears most clearly perhaps from the fact that there is not a single portrait or statue preserving for us the features of Charlemagne or his paladins such as Roland,

or of Alcuin, his 'Minister of Education,' or of Einhard, his adviser and biographer—later sculpture and paintings show the great Emperor either with or without a beard, with a face suggestive of Latin rather than Teutonic ancestry—and not much more is left of the cathedrals and palaces he built in his main seat, Aachen (Aix-la-chapelle), and elsewhere. Yet he was, as far as means of communication permitted, in close relation with foreign countries of advanced civilisation: not only with the foremost Arabian ruler, but also with his own counterpart in the East, the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople to whom he made a gift of the wealthy province of Dalmatia. As go-betweens and ambassadors he usually employed Jews who, long before and during his time, were held in high esteem as learned people skilled in languages and possessing international connexions, while others of their religion had played an important part by introducing the culture of the vine and numerous crafts previously unknown into the German parts of the old Empire. Charlemagne was obviously free from the manifold prejudices that were to hamper many of his successors: he had four wives in succession and, concurrently, five concubines, by whom he had scores of children, mostly daughters. When he died, in 814, his son Ludwig, or Louis, named 'the Pious,' succeeded to the throne of the whole Empire, the premature death of his two elder brothers preventing the usual partition.

### III

814-1077 A.D. :

#### THE FRANCO-GERMAN SPLIT AND THE 'DRANG NACH OSTEN'

LOUIS THE PIOUS, a friend of women, priests and Jews, during a not undisputed reign of twenty-five years, did two things worth mentioning : unlike his father he did not have the Pope bestow the Imperial crown upon him but crowned himself at Aix—an act imitated by Stephen, the next Pope who took the tiara without Imperial sanction—and he partitioned his empire between his three sons Charles the Bald, subsequently ruler of France Lothair, for whom a new realm was created comprising of a narrow strip of land from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, the future Lotharingia or Lorraine; and Louis the German, who got a German kingdom. A weak ruler, Louis the Pious set forces in motion that were to shape the whole future course of European history : the Franco-German conflict on the one hand, and on the other the rivalry between the Papacy and the Imperial power which dominated medieval history. Not yet was there conscious national feeling in either part of the Carolingian Empire, Austrasia, the eastern, the

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Neustria, the western half of the Frankish realm but soon after the death of Louis fighting began between the brothers over their inheritance, and after having defeated Lothair, the French and the German kings met at Strassburg in 842, swearing an oath of friendship in two languages, so as to be understood by both their armies. That oath in 'romana' (old French) and 'teudisca' (the old German language) is the oldest existing document establishing the two different nationalities within the formerly united Empire.

A split in the ruling forces, between the spiritual and the temporal, was nothing new in history. It existed among the Arabs and the Chinese of the period; but in the Christian world the Bishop of Rome, originally only the first among the many Christian bishops, on the strength of his pretensions to the succession of St. Peter, laid claim as Pontifex Maximus to supremacy over the temporal rule. For in ancient Rome the Caesar-Emperor had held that supreme spiritual office too, and the question whether the Emperor was to appoint the Pope, the Pontifex, or whether the Pontifex, crowning and anointing the Emperor, was to be considered as his superior, could never be settled. Whichever of the two was the more powerful decided for the time being the interpretation of their relationship. The Empire itself, considered as universal in an age which knew the existence of only three continents

and very little about two of them and their civilisation, was in any case the common sphere of action of both these powers, and oceans of blood were shed and valuable potential forces of civilisation wasted during the next five hundred years in repeated expeditions across the Alps undertaken with the object of establishing or securing German Imperial supremacy in Italy as against the Pope.

After the Strassburg Oath the Franco-German understanding was confirmed first by a treaty concluded at Verdun in August 843 and later by the treaty of Meerssen—near Maastricht—dated 8 August, 870, after the death of Lothair. This second treaty split the Carolingian Empire into two halves, approximately in accordance with the linguistic character of its inhabitants, and it created a strong German realm that was to prevail for some time over the weaker and less prosperous French kingdom. Lotharingia, divided between the two, was to be resurrected later on as the Duchy of Burgundy which so long hampered the unification and centralisation of France.

The German successors of Louis the Pious, his active and strong-willed son Louis the German, his grandson Charles the Fat who was deposed by Arnulph of Carinthia and—after the death of Louis the Child, the last Carolingian—Conrad of Franconia held France in check and strengthened the Imperial power. They began the conquest of the

eastern marches, fighting Slavonic and Hungarian tribes and expanding the frontiers of the Empire usually under the pretext of a religious and cultural mission, which they had to fulfil as the secular arm of the Christian Church.

In 884 the Magyars, who had migrated into the Danubian plains formerly inhabited by the warlike Huns, appeared on the eastern frontier of the Empire; subsequently they attacked Italy, which had previously been ravaged by the Saracens, and pushed back to Sicily. At the same time the Norsemen harried the coasts of Germany, France and England. It was a period of continuous fighting that forced the noblemen, especially those living near the borders, to strengthen their castles and always keep a number of men in training and under arms.

In this way the knights and barons gained power over the smaller landowners and the peasantry who did homage to them; the monasteries were likewise strengthened, fortified and used as strongholds and treasure-houses, thereby acquiring wealth and influence and giving the Church a more warlike character. Both these new powers within the Empire were later on to contribute largely to its disintegration.

It was some time, however, before the rivalry between the feudal lords and the higher clergy on the one hand and the central power on the other

became visible. For the Carolingian dynasty was succeeded by a number of strong and gifted rulers of the Salian family, Saxon princes who held the sceptre for more than two hundred years, from 918 to 1125. The first of them, Henry the Fowler, was said to have been informed of his election as Emperor while he was bird-catching: he had to catch some more dangerous and elusive game before he could hand over to his successor a country once more strong and united as it had been under Charlemagne. For the dukes of Swabia, Bavaria, Franconia and Saxony fought him for their independence; and on his frontiers he had to subdue Wends—his Slavonic neighbours across the river Elbe—Lotharingians, Bohemians, Danes and Magyars. His son Otto the Great, who crowned himself at Aix, subdued the tribal Dukes and appointed Counts Palatine for each duchy, Counts of the Marches for every border-area, and, as the first of a long list of German emperors, marched into Italy, there to be acknowledged as overlord and to receive homage from the Pope who, on 2 February, 962, bestowed Charlemagne's crown upon him in exchange for a confirmation of the grant of the Papal territories. The Emperor's son Otto II, by marrying the Byzantine Emperor's daughter Theophano, created a link between the Eastern and Western Empires of the time and strengthened the claim first established by his father to the rightful succession

to the Roman Empire—henceforth the official name of the German realm.

Henry III and Otto III emphasised the close contact that had been established between Rome and Germany by investing their rule with a mystic character, claiming to be God's chosen instrument to establish His rule on earth. A strong influence that spread from the many Benedictine monasteries established after the example of Cluny, the chief monastery of the West, founded in 911, contributed to that development, which was to reach its height when a reformist Pope, Hildebrand, under the name of Gregory VII, openly fought the Imperial claim to dispense ecclesiastical offices and appointments. When the Emperor Henry IV took up the glove and tried to depose him, he excommunicated the German ruler; and so strong by then was the moral influence of the Church that Henry submitted to the indignity of crossing the Alps and waiting in the courtyard of the castle at Canossa, where the Pope was staying, for three days in snow and ice, suing for absolution. The consequences were disastrous for the Emperor. German dukes and nobles, who had disapproved of his attitude before his excommunication and after, now openly rebelled and set up anti-kings whom Henry only defeated after a long struggle and by enlisting the help of the peasants and townsfolk against his nobles. The year 1077 was a fateful year indeed. For at Canossa

#### THE FRANCO-GERMAN SPLIT

the Church won its first striking triumph in a fight that was to dominate the whole of medieval history. Without it, the Reformation and the religious wars that were to destroy the political power, the wealth and the civilisation of Germany might never have been.

Not that that civilisation had progressed very far at the time of the Salic rulers. Their law-book, *Lex Salica*, still contains, characteristically, a prohibition of cannibalism for magic purposes; the life in monasteries and convents was by no means exemplary, as is shown by the report on a convent at Pernegg where a certain wealthy Count Ulric kept no less than twelve mistresses; and there was a regular tariff for the crime of rape, the price ranging from twelve solidi to forty-five or fifty shillings. Slavery existed in its worst form, the serfs being practically at the mercy of their masters and their daughters an easy prey to every 'junker' who could claim the *jus primae noctis* before granting them the right to marry. On the other hand the arts and crafts began to flourish, and many of the great German cathedrals owe their existence to the religious zeal of the Salian Emperors, during whose time the 'Romanesque' style, similar to the Norman style in England, developed. But by making their own younger sons or other relatives bishops, and by treating the Church as a privileged institution of the Imperial power, they made it worldly,

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greedy and immoral; they furnished the Popes with the necessary grounds on which to break away from the tacit agreement entered into when Charlemagne had himself crowned by Pope Leo; and when the iron Gregory VII built up his own hierarchy enforcing celibacy upon his clergy all over the world, the Holy Roman Empire lost its strongest moral asset in the game for world domination, together with the 'right of investiture,' i.e. of appointing its own bishops and abbots.

## IV

1077-1338 A.D.

### POPES AND EMPERORS

THE influence of Rome, of the Church, showed itself in music, painting and architecture. Yet the style called Roman, or Romanesque, all over the continent was originally oriental and came to Germany by way of Ravenna and other Italian cities where Byzantine influence had prevailed. The Imperial Palace at Aachen, the cathedrals of Mayence, Speier, Worms and Bamberg are monuments of that style; other buildings show its displacement by the equally non-German Gothic style exemplified in many of the most famous German churches, e.g., at Freiburg, Ulm and Cologne. There are but two types representing a typically German development: the nobleman's castle and the peasant's dwelling. Later on, the development of the German town, with its small, winding streets and gabled houses, added a third element of German origin to the two more striking ones.

Characteristically this development coincides with that of German poetry and literature. The minstrels, who helped to divert and amuse the princes and feudal lords by their songs, and later the master-



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singers of the cities were the precursors of authors and historians destined to give the German people the consciousness of a national character. It was around 1200 A.D. that the Song of the Nibelungs, Germany's national epic, was first put into writing. Much admired as a poem and a cardinal document of German literature, it compares not too favourably with the national epics of other peoples such as the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* of the Greeks, the *Aeneid* of the Romans, the Indian *Mahabharata*, the Spanish *Poëma de Cid* and the French *Chanson de Roland*. Though not lacking in rhythmic and poetic beauty it is fundamentally an unsavoury tale of murder, betrayal, cruelty, savage fighting and greed, the whole story turning around the treasure of the Nibelung dwarfs stolen by Siegfried, the German national hero, who is himself assassinated at the instigation of Brunhild, a former Valkyrie he has helped his brother-in-law, Gunther to win by struggling with the divine maiden in Gunther's stead, invisible in the dwarf's cap. Late poets and historians like to see in Siegfried the typically German hero, adventurous, courageous, slightly naïve; yet he too lends his hand to treacherous dealings, to tricking a royal virgin into an undesired marriage in order to win for himself a king's sister and a high position, while his bravery rests upon his invulnerability won by bathing in the blood of a slain dragon. For real poetry the songs of su

minstrels as Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach and others are much to be preferred.

Fighting against Arabs and Byzantines, eternally longing for southern shores with a sunnier climate and more fertile plains, deeply conscious of the spiritual if not political supremacy of Rome to which they looked as their intellectual home, the Germans of the Middle Ages were open to every suggestion that offered a chance to follow that southward urge. It is not surprising, therefore, that Peter the Hermit found a ready response when about 1100 A.D. he preached the first Crusade to free the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Mahometan 'infidels.' The Emperor Henry V himself at first did not support that movement, for like his father he was still in conflict with the Pope and in fact, in 1110, marched into Italy and finally obtained a compromise over the main issue, the investitures. Even so the princely house of Babenberg financed a Crusade in 1101, and the Imperial power supported all the later ones from 1147 onwards, including the extremely silly and tragic Children's Crusade. The benefit Germany, like other European countries, derived from these adventurous enterprises lay in the acquisition of many valuable arts, crafts and sciences of oriental origin and in a wider knowledge of the world of their day, but the price was enormous, including not only the hundreds of thousands of lives lost in the sands of the

desert or through the swords of the Saracens but the importation of disastrous plagues and epidemics.

It was a craze, a mass-hypnosis such as the Germans seem to have been prone to at all times. A the Mahometan Turks set out for the Holy Cities of their religion, Mecca and Medina; as the Russians had been clamouring, ever since SS. Methodius and Cyril brought them the Greek gospel, for Constantinople; so the occidental peoples, the French and the Germans above all, felt the urge to conquer the birthplace of their religion, the Holy City of Jerusalem. For a short time at least this common aim seemed to engender a European spirit and open up a prospect of unification for the Continent. Home politics and dynastic rivalries soon destroyed that glimpse of a better future: a German battle-cry that was to be heard for centuries far from its place of origin destroyed what solidarity adventures and hardships experienced in common might have created. It was, at first, the battle-cry of two rivals for the German crown: the Bavarian Duke Henry, a member of the Welf family, and Conrad of Franconia, called after one of his villages Waiblingen. The Italian form of their names, 'Guelf' and 'Ghibelline' became, like the English White and Red Roses and the later Whigs and Tories, the names of two political parties, whose struggles took place mainly on Italian soil but involved international forces after 'Guelf' had come to denote the

1189 A.D.

party of the Pope. After Conrad had prevailed over his rival, taken part in the Second Crusade and died shortly after returning from the Holy Land, the Imperial crown fell to Frederick of Suabia, of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, who was to be famous under the nickname of 'Barbarossa.' He tried to settle the Guelf-Ghibelline conflict by exploiting his mother's descent from the House of Bavaria and supported the British-born Pope Adrian IV, but came into conflict with him over the question whether the Empire was held directly from God or only indirectly through the Papal authority. In a number of expeditions against his Italian adversaries and their numerous allies, Frederick in the main suffered defeat, but he made up his quarrel with several successive Popes when the Saracens retook Jerusalem and went on Crusade in 1189. He died from bathing in the cold waters of the river Calycadnus, near the old town of Tarsus. His romantic career took hold of the German imagination, and he became a legend soon after his death. He was supposed to be asleep in a cave below the Kyffhäuser mountain, where his beard had grown through the table; every hundred years he was awakened by ravens which came to tell him whether the Empire was still in existence, and to call him and his sleeping knights to its defence.

The comparatively short period of the Hohenstaufen Emperors, which lasted from 1126 to 1254

and coincides with that of the Plantagenets, whose most romantic figure, Richard Cœur-de-Lion, went on crusade with Barbarossa and was held a prisoner by Frederick's successor Henry VI, brought the second period of universal power for the Holy Roman Empire. In spite of civil wars, with an unruly enfeoffed knighthood at home and enriched and strengthened cities, especially in Lombardy, the acquisition of Italian and other southern lands of superior civilisation and greater wealth gave the Empire a backing of great importance. German counts and barons were appointed rulers in many formerly Latin lands and germanised their populations. Rich booty and other foreign monies such as Richard Cœur-de-Lion's ransom helped to conquer such territories as the former Norman kingdom of Sicily and southern Italy; and when the most brilliant figure of the Middle Ages, Frederick I the *Stupor Mundi*, received the crown in 1208 Germanism had already conquered large territories east, north and south of the former frontiers. Barbarossa had pushed back the Slavonic neighbours of Germany, and consolidated his hold on the March that was to play such a rôle in modern German history; the Teutonic Knights, an ecclesiastical brotherhood originally founded for the conquest of the Holy Land, had established themselves within the borders of the heathen Prussians; and the warlike German merchants of the Hansa, a feder-

#### POPES AND EMPERORS

tion of trading cities most of them situated on the coasts, had extended their influence all over the Baltic and the North Sea, from London to Riga and into Russia as far as Nishni Novgorod. All this had not been achieved without bloodshed and violence.

In modern terms, Frederick II was the first dictator to plan a 'totalitarian' state. His special legacy to southern Italy was a centralised organisation, a kingdom based upon Norman tyranny and Mahometan experience, claiming complete domination over the life of the subject. Trade monopolies, royal privileges for commercial and financial activities, regulated and prescribed wages and working hours, and enormously heavy taxes were introduced. Private life was regulated to such an extent that marriage to an alien needed a special permit; students were obliged to go to the king's university at Naples; a secret police spied into everybody's personal affairs and facilitated the extortion of taxes or bribes; a debased currency was forced into circulation, and many of the most important commodities such as timber, iron and salt were made monopolies of the king's trading department, yielding up to 75 per cent. profit to his treasury. It was, as a famous Swiss historian has described it, a system that aimed at the complete annihilation of the feudal state, at the transformation of the people into a mass without arms or will-power, whose only function was to yield the highest possible taxes; and, though

not carried through to the same extent in the northern part of Frederick's realm, in Germany proper, it was to find imitators there in later centuries and especially in our times.

Needless to say that the system led to corruption and crime. Frederick's own son-in-law and lieutenant, Ezzelino da Romano, in the course of trying to stabilise his rule, became a mass-murderer, thief and criminal of the most infamous repute, and there is no doubt that the age of the most modern, the most brilliant, the most learned of the medieval German Emperors—who had been born and brought up in Apulia in southern Italy—ranks with the most depraved periods of history anywhere. Several times excommunicated by the Pope, probably a complete agnostic himself, Frederick nevertheless, for political reasons, went on crusade twice and obtained by negotiation the cession of Jerusalem and Bethlehem from the Sultan of Egypt. For political reasons also he reversed at home the policy pursued in Sicily by granting comparatively large powers to the German dukes and ecclesiastical princes. After he had armed a strong force of Saracens in order to crush the Pope and the anti-kings set up against the Emperor under anathema, he suddenly died in 1250. His successors, Conrad IV and, after his early death, the young Conradin were unable to make headway against the numerous adversaries, at home and abroad, that raised their

heads as soon as the brilliant figure of Frederick disappeared, and for nearly twenty years, from 1254 to 1273, there was the Great Interregnum, a period of lawlessness and decay during which no German Emperor was elected, while foreign princes, Richard of Cornwall and Alphonso of Castile, unsuccessfully laid claim to the crown.

It was one of those periods, frequent in German history, when the feudal magnates saw their chance of throwing off the Imperial yoke and ruling uncontrolled within their own domains. Half a dozen of these smaller dynasties, from which the Emperor would have to be chosen in the event of the extinction or deposition of a ruling house, were the leading powers, rebels against or allies of the Imperial house according to their varying dynastic or personal interests. Originally but feudal tenants of a power that belonged to the Emperor, Counts Palatine or Margraves entrusted with the administration of a province or a smaller area, all these petty rulers had managed to become hereditary owners of their lands and titles. They were to prove useful in their rivalry with each other as patrons of arts and science, as builders of larger or smaller capitals and as promoters of trade and agriculture. But their luxurious courts, their bodyguards and their frequent military enterprises were a heavy charge on the population, and prevented a greater degree of centralisation such as Britain and France were to



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experience to their great advantage. The character of the population, too, was to suffer from this multiplicity of loyalties demanded from it. It was impossible to develop a national feeling in an Empire where a step across the border of one of the feudal states might mean having to fight against the Emperor though he was supposed to be supreme Lord and though one's previous overlord had been all for his anointed master. No man could be truly loyal to anybody under such conditions.

It was a natural consequence of this state of affairs that the towns developed a strength they had lacked so long as a strong central power, and regional government backed by it, had held the reins. Not that the merchants and craftsmen of medieval Germany were warlike by nature or out for conquest but in order to protect themselves against robbing knights who exacted arbitrary tolls from the merchants who passed their castles, and against feudal lords who plundered them under the guise of taxation, they had to keep mercenary troops and fortify their homes. As international trade progressed with the slow but permanent improvement of roads, ships and foreign contacts, the towns gained wealth. Along the two great trade-routes of Germany—the one leading from Britain and Flanders along the river Rhine, through the towns of Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, Aix, Cologne, Mayence, Frankfort, Freiburg and Basle into Italy, and

other from Scandinavia and the sea ports of Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen via Hanover, Hildesheim, Würzburg, Bamberg, Nuremberg, Regensburg and Vienna into the Balkans and the Near East—came and went precious goods: silks and velvets from France and Flanders, watches and goldsmiths' work from Nuremberg, Venetian glass and lace, oriental swords and spices. Navigation improved with international trade, and the Hanseatic League, originally a sort of co-operative organisation of merchants, became a most powerful alliance of important towns and cities. The establishment of their depot in London, the 'Stahlhof,' dates back to the twelfth century.

As a political power the Hansa goes back to the Rhenish Federation of townships, established in 1251. With the co-operation of Lübeck in 1259, the Federation widened its scope to such an extent that soon afterwards the German trading settlements in Russia, Sweden and elsewhere had to submit to this organisation, which made the whole of northern Europe tributary to its interests. For more than a century they had to be taken into account wherever the interests of predominant great powers were involved, and the Hansa dealt with kings and emperors on a footing of equality. Although under strong German or at least Germanic influence, the Hansa was a markedly super-national, European institution. Yet its zenith coincides with the first marked

triumph of German national feeling, with the 'Königstuhl' at Rense, an old building on the river Rhine where, on 16 July, 1338, the seven electoral princes of Germany took an oath to have the German ruler henceforward put on the throne—as King—without interference by the Pope, leaving it to the successful candidate himself to decide whether he wished also to be anointed as Emperor in Rome or not.

This decision of the seven electors, temporal and ecclesiastical rulers of German countries, was taken after they had won a decisive influence in choosing the head of the Empire. When, after the Interregnum, Rudolf of Habsburg, a minor Swabian ruler and one not likely to disturb the almost independent position of the feudal magnates who had increased their authority during the period of lawlessness, was made Emperor, he lost their favour by showing independence and decision himself, and they refused the crown to his son Albert. He won the crown however, from his elected adversary Adolf of Nassau who was killed in battle, and, by concentrating upon Germany and abstaining from Italian adventure hitherto a fatal tradition of the German rulers, he strengthened the power of his house which was afterwards to rule for five centuries. His brother and successor Frederick had to fight again for the throne, and lost it to the Bavarian Duke Lewis. This Emperor deserves mention for two reasons:

1338 A.D.

#### POPES AND EMPERORS

he established close contact with the English kingdom and, at an Imperial diet at Coblenz on 31 August, 1338, received King Edward III, with whom he concluded an alliance against Philip VI of France and thus contributed towards the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War; and he attracted the Pope's wrath and excommunication upon himself by sanctioning the bigamous marriage of his son with the 'ugly duchess' of Tyrol.

His successor, Charles IV, by promulgating a law called the Golden Bull determined the exact procedure for future Imperial elections, and tried to secure sufficient lands to make the Imperial dignity an heirloom of his dynasty, the house of Habsburg-Luxemburg. As a matter of fact he rather strengthened the centrifugal powers: soon afterwards the Empire lost the precious province of Brabant and the Swiss cantons who founded an independent confederation of their own. Within Germany meanwhile the first 'proletarian' movements developed: in many towns the privileged classes, the guilds and their masters were attacked by the lower population, revolts and armed attacks upon patrician property occurred, and the frequent feuds between barons and cities became complicated by alliances of the municipal and rural nobility against the commoners.

## THE MEDIEVAL SCENE

PARALLEL with the strengthening of the dynastic power of the German Emperors, the House of Habsburg, went a flowering of municipal civilisation, which left a deep impress on the character of German development. The German towns once after another took advantage of the recent invention of fire-arms—unknightly weapons the use of which the barons and feudal powers tried to suppress while the towns established their own powder-mills and taught their clerks and mercenaries the use of these up-to-date means of warfare. Had the movement for a general federation of towns after the pattern of the Hansa been successful, the whole future development of Germany might have been built upon her cities, as was that of Italy and the Low Countries. Even as it was, they grew rich by their flourishing trade—all international routes of importance leading through German territory—and by their mining enterprises. Silver, salt, iron and other minerals were mined successfully to the profit of urban traders who soon became financiers on a large scale, competing with the most successful

bankers of the age, the Lombards. About the year 1400 Cologne, Bruges and Basle had between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants each, and it needed the epidemics and the wars of the following centuries to reduce them to the level far below those figures at which they remained until the nineteenth century.

In the medieval towns the Jews played an important rôle. Although religious fanaticism such as the Crusades had let loose and the Black Death, a plague probably introduced from the East for which the Jews were wrongly held responsible, gave rise to cruel persecutions and mass-murders, nevertheless Jewish moneylenders, often acting as agents for princes of the Church and noblemen who wished to avoid the blame for taking usurious interest, Jewish physicians and Jewish men of learning continued to be in demand. Jewish refugees, who had fled from their torturers into Poland and other eastern countries where they found asylum, contributed largely to the spreading of the German language and civilisation and preserved through the coming centuries the dialect of the older German language that had been spoken along the Rhine at the time of the minstrels. These minstrels—originally walking newspapers carrying from castle to castle the news of the land and, as welcome guests, diverting their hosts by playing the harp and singing their self-composed songs—were soon supplanted in the towns by the

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master-singers, organisations of craftsmen learning and teaching the art of singing and instrumental music according to their own strict rules.

Other arts and crafts followed. The towns became the patrons of architecture and painting, investing patrician wealth in impressive Gothic cathedrals and in secular buildings of great beauty and variety—town halls, guildhalls and private dwellings. Inventions such as the Nuremberg watch and the printing-press, and the universities owe their existence to the development of the cities and towns during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the other hand the particular 'orderliness' of the German character—in which there was always a strong element of narrow-mindedness and subservience to anyone who was sufficiently boastful and arrogant—brought about increasing suppression of any liberal movement, free spirit within the municipal guilds, and kept sincere and progressive men powerless while cliques and families monopolised all power. In the sadistic cruelty of their penal system which included torture as the main form of criminal investigation the industrious craftsmen of wealthy and powerful towns vied with the feudal lords, and their treatment of peasants and serfs became more and more unjust more and more revoltingly brutal, in an age which might have been expected to witness a growth of liberalism and tolerance.

The result was the Peasant Wars which devastated half Germany for half a century, destroying human life and wealth to an extent unheard-of before and not exceeded even by the attacks of the Turks who began to menace the Empire towards the end of the fourteenth century. These were to last for three hundred years and to cost the house of Habsburg the better part of their Hungarian and Balkan dominions and outposts. By 1403 the Ottoman hordes had advanced as far as the frontiers of Styria. Subsequently they devastated Hungary and, after another century of sporadic fighting, conquered it completely, together with Servia, Wallachia and Greece, after they had overthrown the Byzantine Empire and made Constantinople their capital. This conquest was to have far-reaching consequences, not only in the political field. For the Turkish occupation of the ancient trade-routes gave strong impetus to the efforts of seafaring nations to find an outlet in new directions, which led to many discoveries. The dispersal of Byzantine scholars and libraries brought fresh knowledge of the classics, especially the Greek, to Western countries and paved the way for the Renaissance—the 're-birth.' As far as Germany is concerned, it was an intellectual and artistic rebirth, not a political one; for the central power, for a time reasserted by the first Habsburg ruler, Rudolf, was again in decay and more or less confined to a sort of suzerainty,



stronger or weaker according to the dynastic power of the holder at the moment. The struggle against the Turks started during the reign of Sigismund who ruled from 1410 to 1437. Besides that dangerous new enemy, he had to struggle for twenty years against the Hussites, a warlike, rebellious Bohemian sect that took its name from Wycliffe's Czech successor, Johan Huss—forerunner of the Reformation—burnt at the stake during the Council of Constance in 1415—and devastated important parts of the Empire. Religious and pseudo-religious movements were particularly apt to disturb the ever-shadowed *Landfriede*—internal peace—of a nation composed of heterogeneous elements whose rulers strove mainly for an increase of their family possessions either by marriage, or by vast business transactions involving the life, freedom, religion and personal rights of whole populations, or finally by wars waged on the flimsiest pretexts. Mathias Corvinus, King of Hungary, is responsible for the famous distich which begins *Bella gerant alii, tu, felix Austria,audi* and means that while others had to fight for the increase of their dominions the House of Habsburg managed to enlarge and stabilise its power by marriages. In theory that power extended over the whole territory of the Empire, including the Low Countries, Luxemburg, Lorraine, the Franche Comté, Savoy, Piedmont, Provence, Northern Italy, Austria, Moravia and Silesia; the eastern Marches

were Brandenburg and Pomerania, and H  
dukes ruled over Styria, Carinthia and  
within the Empire, and over Hungary and Be  
Outside it.

There were rivals, however, for that power  
Margraves of Brandenburg, of the House  
Hohenzollern that had obtained Brandenb  
from Sigismund, the Dukes of  
Wittelsbach dynasty in the Palat  
Bavaria, were influential as electo  
bishops, the Hansa cities of Bremen  
Lübeck, even after the dissolu  
International Hanseatic League h  
Teutonic Knights on colonial so.  
held sway within their own territori  
without interference by the Emperors.  
Count, baron or knight, however small his  
tried to follow their example, and after the  
peace proclaimed several times, especially in 1473,  
the depredations of the robber-knights, freebooters  
of the highways, were resumed, and murder and  
robbery went on by day and by night everywhere.  
The Teutonic Knights and their fraternity, the  
Knights of the Sword, had sinned particularly gross-  
against the Christian spirit they pretended to up-  
hold. They had started their conquest of heathen  
Russia and the Baltic provinces in 1200 and had  
prospered for two centuries, paving the way for and  
backed by the Hanseatic League and its commercial

imperialism. They had fought against Lithuanians and Poles, made alliances with other 'crusade' and built strong castles against the surrounding heathens, whom they had slaughtered wholesale they could not bring them into subjection. All the time they had prospered, and the Marienburg, the mighty stronghold on the Vistula, was a centre of political influence and intrigue. But in 1440 it provoked an alliance of the awakening cities against themselves as the result of having, as an old chronicle says, 'permitted too many inexcusable things, used false money and measure, beheaded many knights and other noblemen without judgment, have drowned them or poisoned them during banquets, having stolen the inheritances and raped the wives and daughters of many men.' They seem, indeed, to have been anything but defenders of the Faith and when, by the Treaty of Thorn, 1466, West Prussia and Ermeland reverted to Poland, they only managed to save their existence by accepting the remaining territories in East Prussia as a fief from the Lithuanian-Polish Grand Dukes.

The age of the Knights altogether—not only the original religious orders, like the Teutonic Knights, the Knights of the Sword, of St. Mary, or even the Templars and the Knights of Malta—was coming to an end. The invention of gunpowder had deprived their castles and armour of nearly all their protective value. The manorial system inevitable

#### THE MEDIEVAL SCENE

decayed, together with feudalism. The towns had become strong, and individual capitalists like the houses of the Fuggers and Welsers in Augsburg, by strengthening the system of money economy versus the older system of barter, had hastened the downfall of the landed nobility. On the other hand, knowledge had become cheap: the printing press was to bring it within the reach of everybody and thereby to promote unrest, dissatisfaction, a consciousness of the multitudinous wrongs inflicted by a few upon the masses. It is typical of the German mentality that the great revolutions to come took the form, not of social, economic or moral demands, but of religious controversy, and started, not with revolts of suffering serfs, peasants or city rabble, but with scholastic Biblical discussions between a number of more or less famous humanists. They were dry as dust, and their arguments appear to us trivial and pedantic, their problems petty and trivial: yet they were to blow to pieces not only what had survived of the unified German Empire but, in the end, the whole world. Satirical books such as Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* or Ulrich von Hutten's *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* exercised a profound influence; Erasmus of Rotterdam and Johann Reuchlin of Pforzheim forced their contemporaries to think and to criticise.

At the same time social unrest, such as England had seen during Wat Tyler's rebellion and France

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and goes to prove that 'there is nothing new under the sun' and that the peculiar characteristics of the modern Germans are not the product of a particular new creed or new leadership but are to a large extent deep-rooted in the national character.

## VI

1518-1648

### THE REFORMATION AND THE BREAK- UP OF THE EMPIRE

WHEN a young Augustinian monk, a teacher at the University of Wittenberg, fixed his '95 on the door of his church one day in October 1517, he was certainly not aware that he was overthrowing the world order based upon the claim of a universal church and a universal empire. In sincere faith he wanted to see a number of abuses that had developed in the practice of Roman, and even more German, Catholicism abolished and the moral power repressed by the Pope restored. He inveighed especially against the selling of indulgences as practised by Bishop Albrecht of Magdeburg, a Brandenburg Elector of the Church who had paid a heavy price for his dignity and tried to get it back by retail selling the general indulgence granted for his Mayence cathedral. Hot-headed and stubborn by nature, he refused to give in when asked to recant by his superiors and found support in several ruling princes, especially Frederick, Elector of Saxony. In the course of disputing with his adversaries Luther

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soon began to attack the Papal authority itself and thereby, unwittingly, became the idol and the figure-head of a revolutionary movement that was to split Germany in two and to cost millions of lives over the western world.

The Dukes, amongst whom one or the other might have been seriously interested in religious matters, on the whole considered the new faith as an excellent shield for their own dynastic interests. Under pretext of fighting for a purified or, as they might be, for a national church, they were able to reduce the constitutional power of the Emperor further and to establish the hereditary power of their own houses; as incidental benefits they managed to swallow the lands of some minor opponents or some partisan of the Roman-Imperial cause. The idea of making the Scripture, formerly a sacred relic preserved and explained by a specially trained and often highly intellectual clergy, available to everybody, could not fail to appeal to the popular mind; but its realisation was bound to impair and crudely over-simplify what fifteen centuries of culture, tradition and profound knowledge of human nature had transformed into the highest code of ethics the world has known. It was to be interpreted by bigotry, and the last, most precious remnants of the old Graeco-Roman tradition were German intolerance; and, though entitled to respect on account of its naïve-simplicity and burning faith.

it was to strip the thin veneer of civilisation from the primitive, not to say savage, German nature.

Although Luther was no humanist and, in all his rave stubbornness, astonishingly inconsistent and insensitive to the praise of his social superiors, attacks such as are launched against him to this day as a coarse destroyer fighting his church because of his own sensuality, arrogance and superstition are hardly supported by the facts. He was merely the powerful exponent of a widespread movement that existed before he nailed his Theses to the church-door of Wittenberg. The Swiss Ulrich Zwingli, more radical and a better scholar than Luther, the Frenchman Jean Calvin, later of Geneva, founder of Calvinism; Philip Melanchthon, one of Luther's collaborators; and, above all, Erasmus of Rotterdam, the leading intellectual figure of Western Europe—all these and many others had tilled the soil where Luther's seed was to bring forth so prolific and so tragic a harvest. Some of Luther's sayings are, to this day, quoted as typical of his human character. After having called upon the German noblemen to rid themselves of the Roman Church and establish an independent German one, to permit their priests marriage and their children to learn the knowledge of the Bible, he was summoned before an Imperial Diet at Worms, 17 April, 1521. Asked to recant his teachings, he exclaimed: 'Here I stand—I can do no otherwise—God help me—'



Amen.' He did not know that he had challenged the greatest and most powerful ruler that Empire ever possessed, that the twenty-one-year youth in purple, Charles V, the Spanish Habsburg, in a last, glorious, sanguinary twilight of the Universal Monarchy was to rule over a realm 'on which the sun never set,' embracing Germany, Austria, the Low Countries, Spain and the rich colonies of South and Central America from which gold and silver had been plundered in shiploads.

Charles, who for more than twenty years fought Francis I of France and with similarly vain success the electoral and other ruling princes of his own Empire, the Duke of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, the Margrave of Brandenburg and so on, finally united in the League of Schmalkalde against the Catholic Emperor, was the victim of the shortsighted, typically German policy of the backward Protestantism. For while they quarrelled with each other and with their legitimate overlord, not the French but the Turks on repeated occasions allied to them menaced the very life of Germany. The Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent invaded Hungary, conquered Budapest and murdered hundreds of thousands of Christians. Then in 1529 he attacked Vienna and, although beaten back, was undisturbed on the frontiers of the Empire because the idea of the nation had already given way to smaller personal and dynastic interests of the

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his rulers. Thomaßmann Riemenschneider all belong against the Turks, h.

translation of the Bible, these achievements were opportunity to put himself on a standard of general German leader.

He missed another opportunity towards humaned mode of living, e proletarian masses against their Germany of recting their resentment into channels. Any time in ight have produced progress, civilisation of the tional revival. While these masses, mainly dynging to the peasantry, looked up to him as their perator, spiritual and temporal, Luther, mindful of debt to the princes who had given him asylum support, condemned their uprisings with all coarseness and fieriness of his pen, as soon as had begun to murder, to burn and to plunder nobility. 'Kill the lot' was the watchword he to the troops sent out to subdue these hordes were filled with a fanatical belief in a new sianic age, a new apostolic church, a ice to be brought about by bloodshed. And soldiery did, as did their badly armed rganised adversaries. At the end of the Pea ars, which lasted for over half a century, more t housand monasteries had been destroyed, m an a hundred thousand people killed, and te ousands of rebels beheaded, broken on the rned or tortured to death. No episode i nearly resembles the initial period of

Amen.' He did not know that he had won the Wars of the greatest and most powerful Empire there is no parallel Empire ever possessed, that the Anabaptist 'king' youth in purple, Charles V. in 1534-35, and in a last, glorious, socialist state based on universal Monarchy wasm and the principle of the sun never

the Low Countries these troubles and excesses the South also show impressive activity in many commercial and financial enterprise such as the Augsburg houses of the Fuggers and the others, who founded branches all over southern Europe and plantations in the West Indies and the Caribbean or the Ehingers of Ulm, who tried colonisation on a private plan in Venezuela; scientific progress from the many additions to the map made by explorers and from the work of great astronomers like Copernicus and Kepler and of a medical school that developed the ideas of the Italian Lanfranco and the German Albertus Magnus; the growth of learning due to the spread of literature and especially the rediscovery of Plato. Though mainly of foreign origin, these intellectual movements were fostered by the great German Universities founded between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries at Heidelberg, Prague, Leipzig and elsewhere. Hand in hand with them a German art began to develop: painting like Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach and Hans Holbein and great sculptors such as Peter Vischer

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Stoss and Tillmann Riemenschneider all belong to this age.

It is strange that while these achievements were pointing towards a higher standard of general culture and a more refined mode of living, superstition and callousness towards human beings reached a higher peak in the Germany of the Reformation period than perhaps at any time in its history. The shameful chapter of the 'witches' and 'sorcerers' has already been mentioned. Under the influence of a special treatise, Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1486, it developed into a fine art and a system of torture that was to poison the mind of the next three centuries and cost the lives of tens of thousands of poor old women or students striving for knowledge of the mysteries of nature. Torture, invented but hardly ever practised in antiquity, became the mainstay of a corrupt and stupid administration of justice, and an astonishing inventiveness was shown by its officers in designing new and more fiendish instruments. There were protests against both these cankers in the judicial system, but they went unheard and the barbarity of tortures indiscriminately inflicted upon delinquents and innocent people under suspicion or denounced by their personal rivals or enemies undoubtedly contributed towards an ever rising tide of crime and criminality. Even before the great wars

that were to devastate all Germany and throw into a state of barbarism and poverty unheard-of in Christian times, mass murder and every sort of crime were rampant.

To what extent the schism, the splitting-up of Germans in two religious camps—with numerous minor variations on the Protestant side—contributed to that moral decay, can only be guessed. After fierce fighting and numerous Diets to deal with the problem, the Augsburg Religious Peace of 1555 established territorial frontiers between the Protestant and the Catholic lands of Germany and created the principle *Cuius regio ejus religio*, 'Whose region, that religion,' which compelled the subject to adopt the religion of his ruling prince and to change it with him, if the prince for dynastic or other reasons he should choose 'converted.' Charles V, who had striven with varying success for internal peace and the conservation of the old Roman Empire, retired gouty and disgusted after thirty-five years of war to his Spanish monastery of St. Juste and divided his vast empire between his son Philip and other members of the Habsburg family. In 1556 he was succeeded by his brother Ferdinand of Austria, subsequently Emperor Ferdinand I, who with Jesuit assistance fostered the Counter-Reformation. Under his successors—Maximilian, 'the last knight,' a loyal patron of chivalry and the arts, and Rudolf I, a mystic who wasted his time in astrological

ological hobbies—an increase in wealth and prosperity and a certain indifference with regard to the religious problem gave the country a chance of recovery. The Netherlands which, together with Spain, had become part of Charles V's Spanish inheritance, put up a heroic struggle for their liberties and their faith; but they were no longer part of the Empire and never returned to it—partly because they had developed a language and a national existence of their own by the time Luther utilized the written language of the Germans on the pattern of the Saxon Chancellery, which sounded strange to the low-German ear.

The armistice in Germany dulled her intellectual and artistic life. Dogmatism and asceticism, together with bad Latin, prevailed. It was a period of petty interests and petty conflicts. Just such a conflict—about the building of a Protestant church—was to unleash the 'Thirty Years' War, perhaps the most horrible and devastating war in all history. Bohemian Protestant nobles, following an example set by their forefathers at the beginning of the Hussite revolt, threw two Imperial counsellors out of the windows of the palace at Prague—without harming them as they fell upon a dung-heap—when they got a negative reply to their petition. Severe Imperial reprisals brought outside help for the Bohemians; the dissentient vote of Bohemia at the election of Ferdinand II in 1619 and the creation of a Catholic

League against his opponents—that is how a small incident grew into the great conflagration. Imperial general, Tilly, defeated his adversary the Protestant Union, including an anti-king, Palatine Elector Frederick, son-in-law of James England, who subsequently permitted the employment of soldiers in that country to help his son-in-law at least to recover his own inheritance. He failed, although Denmark also allied herself with Frederick and James. Another Imperial general, Count Wallenstein, together with his army invaded Holstein and Denmark in 1627, and on the whole, held the upper hand in a really impoverished and devastated by nearly a decade of war.

A blunder on the part of the zealous Emperor who restored to the Catholic Church two bishoprics and more than a hundred bishoprics secularised since the Reformation, strengthened the Protestant side and brought Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden into the struggle. He landed in Pomerania in July 1630 and made a treaty with the leading French statesman, Cardinal Richelieu, granting subsidies. He won brilliant victories over Imperial armies—though he could not prevent the capture and sack of Magdeburg in 1631, in which more than 30,000 civilians perished—and might have crushed his adversaries completely, had the Emperor, under duress, recalled Wallenstein.

d made him supreme commander. He had, in 30, dismissed this gifted and ambitious general, disapproved of the Edict of Restitution and demanded its repeal as a condition of his taking command. During the battle of Lützen, in which Swedes were victorious, Gustavus Adolphus was killed, and the war degenerated from a struggle which had in spite of everything a certain idealistic tinge into a more or less free fight in which everybody tried to snatch something for himself.

Wallenstein, who had meanwhile become extremely rich and had acquired the lands and title of duke of Friedland, seems to have dreamed of an empire of his own and was murdered in February 1634 by order of the frightened Emperor who afterwards had 3000 masses said for the repose of Wallenstein's soul. The loss of the leading military figure on each side was the signal for the degeneration of the war into something that beggars description—although a famous contemporary author, Samuel von Pufendorf, in his *Simplicius Simplicissimus* has attempted to describe it. The religious conflict which was at the root of the whole fratricidal war was a mere pretext. Protestant generals served the Imperial army, the Protestant Elector of Brandenburg stood against his Swedish brother-in-law with the Catholic Emperor, while Richelieu kept the Protestant Bernard of Weimar into his pay, consolidating the French position in Alsace with his



help. An Imperial cavalry general, Jan de W, invaded France and threatened Paris—the first German invasion on a considerable scale, the being that of the Franks in the fifth century, second that of Otto II in 978, the third that of Charles V in 1544. But while the Dutch were building up their colonial empire and their international trade, while the English were beginning to found settlements in America and elsewhere, Germany lay powerless as her tribes, sects, rulers and groups tore at one another with bestial fury.

A soldiery grown brutish through years of persecution, danger and licence, fighting not for any ideal or ideas but for whoever offered the best chance of loot, devoured like locusts such meagre products of industry and agriculture still yielded under such conditions. The civil population was left to starve or to die from plagues that began to ravage the country. Parents killed and ate their own children; man-hunters went in pursuit of human flesh for food. In order to extort what little gold, silver or other valuables still remained, the mercenaries on both sides—Swedish as well as Imperial—invaded and applied the most terrible tortures: cutting off the soles of the feet and rubbing salt into the wounds, forcing liquid manure into people's mouths, breaking limbs, cutting long strips of skin from men's backs, and hacking off women's breasts. Murder, rape, arson were everyday occurrences.

that was left at the end of the great slaughter, after the 1648 Peace of Münster and Osnabrück had been brought about by sheer exhaustion, was hardly more than one third of the population of 1618. Those who survived were reduced to the standard primitive savages in large parts of the country; flourishing cities and villages had been wiped off the map, and the works of civilisation had become unknown in wide areas. Debased by intermixture with the military rabble of all countries, having even through long years for nothing but the preservation of their skins, townsfolk and peasants had become illiterate, stupid and brutal; the schools of learning and the once famous art-schools had deserted, the churches devastated and plundered, while religious intolerance and oppression by no means diminished. Astonishingly enough, however, the birth of the German theatre and the introduction of Italian opera into Germany were both due to the Thirty Years' War.

Another innovation produced by that war was the standing army. The increasing unreliability of the mercenary troops, which changed sides as soon as they got a better offer, induced Frederick William of Brandenburg, the 'Great Elector,' to dismiss all such forces that had been bound by oath to the emperor and establish a small but faithful permanent army of his own. He thereby confirmed his independence and his absolute power and laid the

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foundation of Prussian predominance in Germany. His task was facilitated by the extreme weakness of most of his rivals, all of whom were licking the wounds that the great disaster had inflicted upon them. It was more than two hundred years before the figures of 1618 as regards the number of homesteads, heads of cattle, and yields of crops, were reached again. Only the Austrian crown-lands and the County of Hesse, where an active female ruler had managed to prevent the worst, fared somewhat better, while the Alps, especially Switzerland, had proved a comparatively safe asylum: Swiss independence as well as that of the Dutch Republic was finally acknowledged by the Peace Treaty.

That treaty marked the end of real Imperial authority and gave birth not only to the Brandenburg-Hohenzollern power but at the same time to a specifically Habsburg dominion, the future Austrian Empire, thus paving the way for a long-drawn-out rivalry between the two most powerful dynasties of Germany which was to end in another fratricidal war. It cost the Empire, too, a valuable piece of territory, Alsace, thereby bringing France to the shore of the Rhine; although Strassburg, the principal city of Alsace, was preserved for Germany as a Free City until, thirty-three years later, it was seized by Louis XIV in the midst of peace. The Holy Roman Empire—'neither holy, nor Roman, nor an

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ire,' as Voltaire later said of it—was on a sick-bed from which it never recovered, and a German nation, a patriotic consciousness reaching further than the borders of the hundred-odd minor states with their parochial outlook, was not yet born.

## VII

1648-1786

### THE RISE OF PRUSSIA

AFTER the disaster of the Thirty Years' War, the Germans began to expand in three directions as soon as a certain recovery had taken place. Emigration, mainly to North America, started about 1680 on a comparatively large scale: the landing of the first settlers who founded Germantown in 1683 to this day commemorated by a 'German Day' kept by German communities in the U.S. During the same period the defeat of the Turks who for a century and a half held sway over former outposts of the Empire south-east of Vienna opened new fields for German settlements in the Danubian basin. In both directions German influence, language and trade began to spread. The third, most obvious and most lasting expansion was that engineered by the Great Elector, virtually the founder of the Prusso-German power. He ruled for nearly half a century and, unlike his predecessors of the thriving house of Hohenzollern, proved himself a man with a wide range and a far-sighted policy. Like his forefathers who had held the Electorate

## THE RISE OF PRUSSIA

Brandenburg since 1415, he protested his loyalty to the Emperor and the Empire and coined such popular slogans as 'Remember that you are German!'—by no means a commonplace at a time when every German princeling set up as another Louis XIV and as sovereign master over the life and death of his subjects—but in fact he changed sides and alliances, broke faith and treaties, as readily as anybody else whenever it promised to further his dynastic interest.

At different times he fought alone for the Rhenish counties of Julich and Berg, with the Swedes against the Poles, thereby obtaining control in East Prussia and Ermeland, and with Austria, Denmark, Poland and the Low Countries against the Swedes who lost the southern coast of the Baltic except Livonia and Estonia. All this happened between 1651 and

. Then, in 1672, after a period of peace which he employed to good purpose in organisation and colonisation within his own largely swampy and uncultivated lands, he joined with the Emperor in aiding the Dutch, who were attacked by Louis

. During the subsequent years of warfare his military fortunes fluctuated. For a short time he freed Upper Alsace from the occupation of French troops, but when the Swedes, now allied with France, invaded his own territories, he turned back and defeated them in the famous battle of Fehrbellin on June, 1675. It was a period of dynastic wars

not to be measured by modern standards; but even so, a volte-face such as Frederick William made when he handed over to France two of the most important Rhenish-Westphalian fortresses of the Empire and allied himself with Louis XIV against Spain, thus giving him a chance to take the old German city of Strassburg in 1681, exceeded the usual measures of dynastic egotism. However, his policy was successful in uniting his scattered territories and in winning him independence and recognition as a European power; he enriched his country by draining moor-land, by colonisation, by the attraction of foreign craftsmen such as French Huguenots, and by a first tentative experiment in African colonisation, and established the military prestige of his army. Up to a point his reign was successful, although largely at the expense of the Empire: he had a good excuse, however, since the Imperial house itself confined its efforts to the consolidation of the power and wealth of the Habsburg dynasty, and other German princes, even less conscious of their national obligations, they took service wherever glory and riches were to be gained, treacherously fighting for the enemy of their country if he gave them a high command, an army, or perhaps a marshal's baton.

This mercenary spirit in the German princes was responsible for one of the most shameful chapters in German history: their selling of their subjects

foreign rulers. Electors and Landgraves of Hesse and Saxony began this practice about 1685, and here is a case on record when one of them 'lent' 1000 men each to the English and to their Bavarian adversaries at the same time. Other unfortunate German peasants fought in the American wars and in Dutch colonies, thereby producing a large income for their sovereigns who spent it on splendid palaces, rich food and drink, and rapacious mistresses. Indirectly this kind of German 'export' helped to finance a new development of art and literature, since all the small princes vied with each other as patrons of famous men. The idea of Germany as a nation existed only in the brains of philosophers like great Leibniz at Hanover, or of some poets; the rulers, of whom the chief were the houses of Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Wettin (Saxony) and Wittelsbach (Bavaria and the Palatinate), alternately allied themselves with foreign countries against each other. The Hanoverian heirs of the 'Welf' dynasty were naturally connected with England; the Saxons adopted the Catholic faith in order to gain the Polish crown, while the Hohenzollerns, especially the Great Elector, changed sides so often that it is difficult to disentangle that web; in 1688, shortly before his death, Frederick William, furious at the capture of Strassburg by his ex-ally, proclaimed alliance with his relative William of Orange when the latter was on the point of becoming King of England, against



Louis XIV, but was prevented from carrying out his plans by the French invasion and complete devastation of the Palatinate.

The utter decline of Imperial power and national feeling brought about by the Thirty Years War, the state of misery and despair in which hungry masses of serfs were kept by tyrannical and prodigal petty rulers, cannot be demonstrated more clearly than by the numbers of German emigrants who tried to find homes in other countries. Not more than 33,000 refugees from the Palatinate, whose rulers were closely related to the House of Stuart, fled from Turenne's plundering French soldiers to England and were either settled in Ireland and the American colonies or, after many sufferings, transported to Germany. The population of whole villages on the river Moselle settled in Transylvania where to this day they are wrongly designated Saxons. Württembergers—Suabians—repopulated the southern plains of Hungary, the Banat, retaken from the Turks; others emigrated later on to the lower course of the Volga. Materially they had little to lose, and what sentimental attachment to their country can the citizen feel whose ruler sides with the highest bidder? During the War of the Spanish Succession, the next great affliction of a country that was hardly yet beginning to recover from the previous catastrophe, the Electors of Bavaria and Cologne fought on the side of Louis XV of France.

while the armies of the Emperor they betrayed were successfully led by the French Prince Eugene of Savoy.

From 1697 to 1714 the question who should inherit the heirless Spanish throne was a European, world problem for which armies marched all over the continent, hundreds of thousands shed their blood, alliances were concluded and treaties signed, broken again and rearranged, bribes given and taken and treachery committed; for the gigantic Spanish possessions overseas would destroy the balance of Power whichever way they were put on the scales. Two partition treaties failed to settle the problem; in September 1701 a 'Grand Alliance' was signed between the German Emperor, England and Holland, to which Prussia and Hesse joined themselves later on, with the object of preventing ever the union of the Spanish with the French and excluding France from Spain's colonial empire. The battles of Hochstaedt, Blenheim and Splaquet, that made Marlborough as well as Eugene famous, were the immediate results; subsequently Britain gained Gibraltar, Newfoundland, Indian and other territories; the Emperor the Spanish Netherlands, Naples and other parts of Italy; and Prussia, a new kingdom created by the late Elector's conceited and spendthrift son Frederick in 1701 by uniting Brandenburg and Pomerania with his eastern dominions, obtained

recognition and some territory in Guelderland. kingdom, even if comparatively small and poor that meant a full vote in the concert of powers, an equal with other kings and even emperors, stepping-stone to world power. It was a long way from the bargain concluded three centuries before by a Nuremberg Burgrave with the Emperor for the fief of the March, the poor and unruly border province of Brandenburg; and much bloodshed, treachery and political craft on the part of otherwise mediocre, often stupid, superstitious and cruel Hohenzollern rulers had already paved the way when the first genius among them, the Great Elector Frederick William, brought himself and his country into the limelight.

His son, besides Guelderland, increased his territories by the inheritance of the Swiss principality of Neuchâtel, but squandered millions on his vainglorious ambitions. He was succeeded by an eccentric and half crazy son, Frederick William I, the sergeant-king who ruled with a corporal's stick and increased his standing army to the respectable figure of 83,000, all uniformly drilled like no other soldiers in the world. Otherwise avaricious and pedantic, he spent fantastic sums in the acquisition of giants for his guards who would not stop even at crime to secure a particularly desirable specimen, within or without his dominions. On the other hand he created the first really effective

financial, economic and administrative system, encouraged trade and industry and, at a time when other rulers were squandering millions on the building of splendid palaces—in Vienna, Dresden, Würzburg, Nymphenburg, Bamberg, etc.—he filled his treasury with the products of taxation enforced by an upright, strictly controlled and exemplary bureaucracy. The first important Hohenzollern rulers, who in effect reduced the position of the nobles by favouring peasants and burghers, simultaneously created a new kind of nobility, that of the military and administrative officials; in this by the principle of subordination to the state, laid the foundations of that notorious ‘Prussian’ which was to find its extreme embodiment in dictatorial, totalitarian state of the Nationalists.

The Great Elector had proclaimed, ‘I establish my throne like a *Rocher de Bronze*’; his grandson Frederick the Great was to call himself ‘first servant of the State.’ The more easy-going, more individualist Germans south and west of Prussia were loath to accept such disciplinary measures and were therefore unable to withstand the might of a power whose whole existence was organised on military lines. The first attack of that which the upstart Prussia made was young Frederick’s breach of a guarantee given by his father concerning the succession to the Habsburg throne.

The Emperor Charles VI had no son; by arrangement with most of the Electors and other ruling princes, called the Pragmatic Sanction, he in 1732 secured the succession for his daughter Maria Theresa. Hardly had Frederick, after youth full of bitter experience, privation and oft deliberate cruelty inflicted by his father, succeeded to the Prussian throne—in 1740—when under shadowy claim to the Silesian duchies he invaded that Austrian territory. His army was better drilled and prepared, if not more numerous, than the Imperial troops; moreover, he laid aside scruples about his obligations as a German prince and Elector and allied himself with France and Bavaria, whose ruler had himself been elected Emperor and held that office, as Charles VII. three years. The ensuing war lasted until 1742 gave Frederick Silesia, but it let loose a whole series of other wars in which Sweden fought against Russia, France and Bavaria against Maria Theresa who had herself crowned Queen of Hungary in 1745, her consort, Francis Stephan, German Emperor, while Britain, with an Anglo-Hanoverian Hessian army under Lord Stair attacked the French on German soil. The question of Austria's Italian territories, claimed by Spain, and vast if very reasonable plans concerning a redistribution of the whole central European map further complicated the conflict and gave Frederick of Prussia

another pretext for the invasion of Bohemia.

It is not likely that many Germans of the period knew exactly for what or for whom they were fighting. The unfortunate rabble who died or suffered on foreign battlefields certainly knew nothing about it; for, as Macaulay put it, 'in order that he might rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the Great Lakes of North America.' Macaulay speaks of Frederick's 'selfish rapacity' and of 'the evils produced by his wickedness that were felt in lands where the name of Prussia was unknown.' Other British historians such as Carlyle are less harsh in their judgment of the—undoubtedly—greatest genius produced by the Hohenzollerns. Frederick, a prince who easily outdistances all others in modern German history by his gifts, his winning influence and the gains in power and prestige which he won for his own country. Yet he sacrificed hundreds of thousands of his countrymen to his ambitions and in the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763, suffered more set-backs, including the loss of his capital Berlin on two occasions, than any other general in history before winning a final victory. He had abandoned France and sided with Spain. The Empress had allied herself with Russia, Spain, and a number of minor powers sided with Frederick or the other of these alliances, though mostly

with reserves as to whom they did or did not want to attack. It was in its way a world war, and it was for Britain Canadian and Indian possessions taken from France, and for Frederick enormous prestige if no other gain beyond the confirmation of his conquest of Silesia. But 13,000 houses in Prussia alone were destroyed, Prussia's population decreased from four and a half to four millions, public debt took the place of the former surplus accumulated by the thrifty Frederick William, and the value of Prussian, and German money in general, was reduced to a pitiable level.

The 'enlightened despot' —as Frederick liked to be called—made use of the twenty-three years' peace that were left to him to reorganise his state, to encourage arts and letters, with a marked preference for all things French, and to establish some sort of justice and equality within his realm. He availed himself of the weakness of Poland to acquire by a simple arrangement with the Russian Empress Catherine the Great in 1772 and 1775, large parts of that unfortunate buffer-state between Prussia and Russia. Austria shared in the spoils, for the wresting of which from a Slavonic people furnished no better pretext than the one-time conquest of the Teutonic Knights in the northern parts of the partitioned area. Frederick's last years were saddened by an ever-increasing misanthropy, by the inadequacy of his heir, a nephew (he had no children).

his own), and by the shadow of a revolution that is not to fall upon his own lands in the first place, it in its consequences to hit them all the more severely. The privileges of monarchy, aristocracy and the dynastic concept of the state were doomed long before they received the death-blow of the French Revolution, and a man so deeply interested in French thought and letters as Frederick could not see the direction that the teachings of Voltaire, Rousseau and others would give to world affairs. Maria Theresa's son, Emperor in association with her from 1765, and alone after her death in 1780, had an even clearer notion of what the times needed and tried hard to introduce a more 'democratic' line; unfortunately his well-meaning dilettantism and the paternalism behind his radical innovations missed the mark and instead of encountering support and encouragement he met with obstruction. Originally an admirer of Frederick, Joseph II was forced to contend with him; he tried in vain to get rid of the Great away from the Prussian sphere of influence and let himself be inveigled instead into a Russo-Austrian war against Turkey.

The contrast between the great and cynical Frederick and the idealistic amateur Joseph clearly marks German conditions during the second half of the eighteenth century. The enlightened despot, isolated and friendless, with the bitter saying: 'I am tired of ruling over slaves,' and the kind-



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hearted Emperor dies broken-hearted, when even the peasants whom he has liberated as far as he could revolt against him. They both failed to see that the age of the 'subject' was giving way to that of the 'citizen' who wanted a say in the government of his country. This was to be a very short period as far as the Germans were concerned, inaugurated by gun-fire and bloodshed which broke rudely upon the graceful dances of silk-clad cavaliers into upon minuets and gavottes, and drowned the divine melodies of Mozart and Haydn. The Baroque and Rococo period had given a veneer of refined, Frenchified civilisation to a fundamentally still medieval, cruel, reactionary and barbaric Germany, a nation that still clung to the old Teutonic principle that might is right and the Devil may take the hindmost. Torture as an everyday instrument of 'justice,' persecution of minorities, Jews and religious communities still survived; witches were still drowned or hanged in a number of German states, soldiers were pressed and made to run the gauntlet for minor misdeeds; petty tyrants extorted legal and illegal taxes from their subjects in order to squander millions on their mistresses and sumptuous banquets; the majority of the peasants still lived under the degrading system of serfdom, and what improvements were made in their lot were granted as a generous gift by their rulers and not as a human right.

Politically, Prussia had established her predominance in Germany proper before Frederick died in 1786. The Empire was in decay, the once flourishing house of Habsburg, which had grown great, according to the old saying, by successful marriages, now confined its interest to its Austrian, Hungarian, Bohemian and other heterogeneous crown-lands, most of them outside the Empire. Prussia, in its parts, had never belonged to it either, having been heathen until about 1300, under Polish suzerainty until 1660, and having remained Slavonic in all its main characteristics, if not in its language, through all the vicissitudes of its political history. The partition of Poland and the beginning of the extrusion of Turkey from the Balkans were to raise Eastern questions that would influence the whole trend of subsequent history.

## VIII

1786-1848

### THE DEATH OF THE EMPIRE

THE American War of Independence, the revolt of the Netherlands against Austrian rule, which led in 1790 to their independence, in conjunction with the French Revolution shattered the foundations of the now ramshackle German Empire. A vigorous breeze blew, as contemporary German authors say, 'upon the powdered wigs, tousled them and cut at their pigtails.' Yet there was some resistance. In 1791 Joseph's gifted successor, the Emperor Leopold, came to the aid of Maria Theresa's extravagant daughter Marie Antoinette and her husband King Louis XVI of France, in alliance with Prussia, Spain and Sweden. But they tried to no avail. After Leopold's premature death, his successor Francis II together with Prussia fought against the French republican armies in a short but fateful campaign in 1792; on September 20, the day of the declaration of the French Republic, the Prussians suffered defeat at Valmy, retreated from French territory and left the task to Austria. Germany's greatest thinker and poet, witness

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battle of Valmy, in itself unimportant, and said :  
'From to-day and from here a new chapter of history  
will be dated, and you may say that you have been  
present.'

The Prussian ruler, Frederick William II, a de-  
bauched and gluttonous anachronism of a king, after  
breaking faith with Austria gladly accepted Cather-  
ine the Great's suggestion to share with her what was  
left of Poland while Austria was engaged elsewhere ;  
in 1793 he got Danzig and Thorn together with the  
province of Posnan, in 1795 the whole area round  
Warsaw including the capital, while Austria was  
indemnified ' with Cracow with its environs. The  
access of the young revolutionary soldiers of France  
against the veterans of the Prussian army organised  
the great Frederick, British activities which  
led other German sovereigns—the rulers of  
Brunswick, Hesse and Baden—to place their troops  
under British command, made the Prussians un-  
willing to continue the struggle at the side of  
Austria. They had come to feel a certain element of  
sympathy with the ideas, if not the political trend,  
of the French revolution. It was a sort of romanti-  
cism that was to repeat itself with every new revolu-  
tionary movement, an expression of the deep-rooted  
longing for permanent peace. The ideals of  
liberty, equality and fraternity seemed to promise  
a Utopia, and a people which had repeatedly  
suffered devastating wars like the 'Thirty Years' and

the Seven Years' Wars, may be forgiven a certain short-sighted enthusiasm such as was shown by the Berlin intellectuals around 1795 and again in 1830-1848 and, in relation to the Bolshevik revolution after 1918. It is the German form of Pacifism, unlikely to revert to militarism as soon as the first disillusionment occurs. Immanuel Kant, Germany's greatest philosopher and probably the most eminent figure in Prussian intellectual history, wrote his famous treatise 'On Perpetual Peace' at this time and the great patriotic poet Friedrich Schiller, and after him a whole school of minor playwrights and authors, published a number of bold, dramatic plays. It was under the influence of such spiritual currents that the Prussian king Frederick William compromised with the French Republic in 1795 although the conquest of the Netherlands by the enterprising French generals revealed an aggressive tendency in the idealist and international movement started in Paris. Austria, southern Germany and Switzerland had to bear the brunt, while Britain where Pitt had realised the small help to be got from emigrés and other allies—opened peace negotiations, and the French Directory, which succeeded the Terror, directed its military activities to Italy.

The result was the triumph and the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Austria was invaded by the army of northern Italy; Francis II, already more Austrian than a German ruler, made peace

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expense of Venice and, in secret clauses, of Prussia. The peace lasted for not much more than a year and ended with an alliance of Austria, Russia and Britain against France. Intrigues of rival courts and leading personalities, military defeats of the leading power, Russia, on foreign battlefields, the creation of Napoleon's 'Continental system,' which was meant as a blockade of Britain, weakened the cause of his adversaries and opened the way for him into the heart of a Germany split by competing dynastic interests and exhausted by vain efforts to uphold feudalism, absolutism and a narrow caste-system. A series of varying coalitions against Napoleon followed, but his brilliant victories—Marengo and Jena in 1806, Ulm and Austerlitz in 1805, Eylau and Auerstaedt (over the Prussians) in 1806—established his control of Germany. It had been proclaimed, in February 1803, by the 'reorganisation' decreed upon the Empire under French influence, that the left bank of the Rhine, including Cologne and Trèves, the Free Cities were reduced from fifty-six to six, ecclesiastical states were secularised and a few larger German states such as Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden benefited by the arrangement. Nearly half of the 300 'sovereign' princes, states and princelings disappeared, and the rest handed over to a few of the western and northern rulers laid the foundation of that Rhenish Confederation which, after Austria's defeat at Aus-

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terlitz, gave Napoleon the better part of Germany as a Protectorate.

The Napoleonic broom undoubtedly swept away a great many of the medieval cobwebs which hung over all Germany, over rulers and subjects, the minds and institutions alike. It struck at the wig and the pigtails, relics of the Rococo period and the Frederician barrack-square. But it could not transform the fundamental German, and even less the Prussian, mind which regarded the events of the day from the point of view of dynastic, political and military power politics exclusively, and did not regard them as the harbingers of a new age demanding operation, unification, a European outlook. Frederick William III, who had succeeded his father, was his exact opposite—pedantic, thrifty, correct in his private life, but irresolute and short-sighted. He hesitated for a long time to avoid definite commitment to either of the two main camps set against each other, the British or the French, but only succeeded in falling between two stools. After Tilsit he accepted a sort of 'Entente' with Napoleon after the foundation of the Rhenish Confederation which completely surrounded Prussia, he sent the French Emperor an ultimatum, went to war and was defeated. Notwithstanding belated help from him by Tsar Alexander I, son of the assassinated half crazy Tsar Paul, he lost half his territory and had to take refuge in East Prussia and abandon

the victor and finally, betrayed by his romantic ally, to sign the disastrous peace of Tilsit, 9 July, 1807.

The direct or indirect consequence was the creation of four new kingdoms in Germany: Bavaria, Württemberg, Hanover and Westphalia, the latter being given to Napoleon's brother Jerome, a spendrift and voluptuary. On the other hand, reduced and impoverished Prussia found a number of gifted men to work for her restoration, such as the Baron von Stein, creator of municipal self-government, Hardenberg, who together with Stein put an end to serfdom, Scharnhorst who reformed the army and created a system of general conscription, at first secret. Philosophers like Fichte and Hegel, developing the Frederician notion of 'Service to the State,' laid the foundation of that Prussianism which was to find its apogee in the totalitarianism of the National-Socialist Dictatorship a century and a half later. In Napoleon's time it took the form of a violent patriotism which clamoured for liberty, and led to the formation of a number of 'Landwehr regiments,' whose attacks upon French and allied troops further inflamed the national feelings. German romanticism thrived on their brave deeds, which provided material for a whole school of poets, while German volunteers—Hanoverians under Wellington in Spain, Prussians in the Tsar's service and so on—continued a fight that had been deemed lost after Austerlitz, Jena and Eylau.



The old Holy Roman Empire was dead. On 6 August, 1806, Francis II had relinquished its crown and confined himself to his Austrian Empire. The Rhenish parts of Germany and her main coast including Bremen and Hamburg, had been annexed to France; under the name of the Rhenish Confederation, the better part of the country was protectorate of that upstart heir of Charlemagne who had transferred his universal monarchy to the western half after a thousand years of German predominance. Prussia, whatever her shortcomings and her essentially non-German character, was the only possible nucleus for a re-birth of Germany, and despite the unwillingness of a weak and hesitating ruler she was finally forced to play that rôle. When Napoleon broke with Russia, who resented the creation of a Grand Duchy of Warsaw and negotiation with Britain, the foundations of a powerful coalition against the French ruler were laid. Starved German, and especially Prussian, troops succeeded to march with his 'Grande Armée' and share the catastrophe of the retreat from Moscow and the disaster of the Beresina, and although none of the 140,000 that marched with him into Russian winter died for a cause that was the reverse of theirs, the coalition, the fourth that was to triumph in stemming the flood of Napoleonic imperialism, was established as soon as Napoleon embarked on his Russian venture. Frederick William by

be forced into it, which was accomplished mainly by the insubordination of General York who, on 30 December, 1812, deserted with his troops from the French army and concluded the 'Convention of Tauroggen' with the Russian general Diebitsch; a wave of patriotism flooded the whole country and evoked the famous later appeal of Prussia's king to his people.

The Austrians, having been beaten decisively at Agram in 1809, ceded Trieste and Dalmatia to form Napoleon's Illyrian Provinces, and having seen a daughter of their Emperor, Marie Louise, become Napoleon's Empress, were even more reluctant to attack once more the man who had gone on defeating them ever since he forced the passage of Lodi against their troops in 1796. It was not until 11 August, 1813, that the Austrian Empire joined in the fight successfully begun by Prussia and conducted by her ablest famous general Blücher, and the first battle in which the allied forces on both sides met face to face, the decisive one of Leipzig, 16-19 October. 100,000 Russians, Prussians and Austrians were pitted against 135,000 French and Rhenish Germans, but the French had the better artillery and greater military experience. 120,000 men on both sides lost their lives or limbs in that battle, the anniversary of which was celebrated as a German national holiday for a hundred years.

It is not our task here to record individual battles

or treaties. The events that followed belong to military history, and the part played by the German in the fight against the collapsing Corsican dictator is so intertwined with that of the other nations taking part in the struggle that only a few outstanding names deserve mention: Marshal Blücher; Gneisenau, his Chief-of-Staff; Prince Schwarzenberg, the Austrian commander; Prince Metternich, Austria's able Prime Minister. Some minor successes Napoleon obtained during his retreat from French soil made them all weary of the great war and had not Lord Castlereagh, supported by Talleyrand, used all his skill and power of persuasion to bring the fight to a finish and Napoleon's downfall might never have happened. It is this lack of stubborn determination, this readiness to betray a great cause, this unfaithfulness to faithful allies, that runs like a leit-motif through the whole course of German history. Only a century before, in October 1809, Francis II. abandoned his faithful Tyrolese, for months glorious in their mountains against Franco-Bavarian forces, without even having the courage to tell them what he had done, with the result that their leader, Andreas Hofer, bearer of the Emperor's garter chain, was captured, tried as an insurgent and executed by a French firing-squad—betrayed both by the government and by one of his own followers. Stein, the non-Prussian reformer of broken Prussia, had to go into exile, abandoned by his

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to French rancour; and though he continued to work for the German cause, he died a disappointed man far from the scene of his greatest achievements.

After the downfall of the 'tyrant' the German people, which for once had stood up united and in spirit of common sacrifice, experienced bitter disappointment. Instead of the personal liberty that had been the attraction of the French Revolution and had come to a considerable part of the former subjects and serfs of petty rulers in the wake of the French armies, narrow dynastic interests triumphed at the peace conference, the famous Vienna Congress of 1814-15. Germany became a Confederacy; Russia got the Rhineland which France had to surrender, and a large part of Saxony, and was contented in the possession of her spoils from the first and second partitions of Poland, while Austria kept Galicia and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, which had been handed over to Russia. Numerous smaller German states were abolished, their sovereigns being content, satisfied by 'equality of birth,' i.e., the right to intermarry with ruling houses; thirty-eight independent states and free cities remained loosely tied together in the German *Bund*. The whole arrangement, a result of much fighting, intriguing, bargaining and dancing, was a blow to the principles of nationality and self-determination, a last desperate attempt to bolster up 'legitimacy.' In order to safeguard it the 'Holy Alliance' was set up—an

alliance officially directed against disturbers of the new European peace but in fact utilised for the crushing of the democratic spirit and democratic institutions wherever they showed themselves, especially in the German countries.

As far as the German citizen was concerned Leipzig and Waterloo had been fought in vain. He had no reborn nation to be proud of. Austria's interest was more than ever absorbed by her foreign domains, to which Italian Lombardy had been added; Prussia's rule was accepted unwillingly in all the western territories assigned to her, and her shortsighted and reactionary government at once began to spy upon 'demagogues' and democrats. In a moment of dire distress the King had promised to grant a liberal constitution; victorious, he tried to avoid redeeming his pledge, and the lesser German rulers who had granted such rights to their subjects in 1816 and 1818, mostly reverted to absolute government as speedily as one pretext was permitted. On the other hand, as in Britain about the same time, the period of peace which followed the defeat of Napoleon and lasted thirty-nine years—the longest in all German history—was one of economic progress. The *Zollverein*, a customs union promoted by Prussia and by her enforced upon all other German states, helped to increase trade within and without the boundaries of the Confederation and paved the way for a

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Reich under Prussian domination, Austria being excluded from this growing economic federation.

Prusso-Austrian rivalry did not show itself at once. Prince Metternich, Austria's aristocratic Prime Minister and, with Talleyrand, the outstanding figure of the Vienna Congress, often backed by the able mediation of the English delegate, Castlereagh, continued to play a dominant part in German politics and closely collaborated with the leading Prussian, Bavarian and other German statesmen for the purpose of reasserting the unrestricted power of the Sovereign. The Universities were especially suspect in his eyes, and professors and students alike were subjected to severe repression. A number of international conferences and congresses took place mainly or exclusively for the purpose of suppressing liberalism and crushing the spirit of revolution which so the rulers of the day wanted to believe—had been instilled into their otherwise happy populations by the French Revolution and its last exponent, Napoleon. The best thinkers and authors of the day were driven into exile or put in gaol, and the rapid development of the United States owes a good deal to the efforts of German rulers and bureaucrats to suppress every movement that savoured of freedom of thought or aspirations after civic rights. The police, including Secret Service, Black Cabinet, *Lettres de Cachet*, was almighty; a state of affairs very similar, if not so extreme in the means

adopted, to that under the later Nazi dictatorship developed, especially in Prussia. A conference of the members of the 'Holy Alliance,' joined by many minor German governments, brought about the 'Carlsbad Decrees' of 1819, which were to direct policy in all the countries concerned until 1830, and in some of them until 1848.

This policy, designed to prevent revolution 'from below'—Metternich declared every revolution promoted from above legitimate at the Troppau conference of 1820—reigned supreme during a period which was marked by great progress in other respects, largely due to German initiative. Important inventions and enterprises date from this period: the first railways, Nuremberg to Fürth in 1835, Dresden to Leipzig in 1839, were opened while the first Dutch steamer on the Rhine appeared in 1816, the first German one in 1818. The astonishing development of German science and scholarship—connected in the post-Napoleonic era with such names as Humboldt, geographer and linguist; the brothers Grimm, folklorists and philologists; Thaer, founder of scientific agriculture; Sertürner, discoverer of morphine; D. F. Strauss and Baur, theologians; Niebuhr, pioneer of critical history—was due less perhaps to the comparatively long period of peace Germany enjoyed during the decades than to the frequent, enforced contact with the outer world during the preceding period.

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revolution and warfare. It was undoubtedly aided, in the case of the then famous University of Göttingen, by the personal union of the Hanoverian and British crowns and the ensuing relationship between the two countries, which was, however, broken up in 1837 when Queen Victoria succeeded the British throne, because the Salic law prevailing in Hanover excluded the succession of a queen.

In apparent contradiction to their general policy of reaction, the German princes, and with them public opinion as far as it was permitted expression, encouraged the Greek revolt against the Turks, and with its success the acceptance of the Hellenic monarchy by Otto, a son of the Bavarian king, started a precedent in favour of Germanic rulers in the Balkans, Bulgaria and Roumania in due course following the example of Greece. This was, however, the only way in which the successful efforts of the great powers to extend their dominions were imitated by the Germans. France acquired her North-African colonies, Britain extended her rule in Africa and India, Russia conquered the Caucasus, Central and eastern Siberia, while the powers of the German Confederation quarrelled at their Frankfurt Diet. The great national poet Goethe, the 'Germanic man,' died in 1832, too generally admired and celebrated to exercise influence in the direction of human and political progress; Heinrich Heine, of Jewish descent, next to him perhaps the greatest



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lyric poet of Germany, had to live in exile in Paris, whence he inveighed bitterly against the Prussian censorship; the revolution of July 1830 accomplished nothing except the expulsion of the Duke of Brunswick, and some constitutional changes in Saxony and Hanover. Intellectual and economic fertility went hand-in-hand with political sterility until, under the rule of the feeble-minded Emperor Ferdinand (from 1835) in Austria and the romantically but equally unbalanced Frederick William IV (from 1840) in Prussia, Socialist and Communist ideas began to ferment in the proletarian masses.

Although Frenchmen like Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Proudhon had laid the foundations of the movements, it was the Germans Engels and Marx who erected on them a doctrine and created the slogans of 'Class War' and 'Expropriation of the Bourgeoisie,' and who founded the First International. The mechanisation of industry created a new social problem in Germany as elsewhere, but it was perhaps more deeply felt in a country split up into many small states, and just beginning to recover from centuries of stagnation. With this and the general inclination of the German spirit to extremes and to the enthusiastic acceptance of sonorous slogans, the impetus of the French revolution of March 1848 was bound to excite the numerous elements of opposition in the German states. It was not only a social revolution

hat broke out in the spring of 1848; there was a strong element of nationalism in the demands presented to the rulers of the German states, who gave one after the other. Baden, Württemberg, Hanover, Brunswick, Saxony, Hesse—where a particularly unpopular petty tyrant was dethroned—demanded constitutions or more liberal laws, freedom of the press and whatever else was demanded from them. In Vienna, where the students played an important part along with the working population, and in Berlin there was bloodshed in fierce street-fights; in Munich an elderly king came to grief for his obstinate attachment to his mistress, a so-called Spanish, in reality Irish-born, dancer called a Montez. The Frankfort parliament, assembled in order to rebuild Germany on new, democratic principles under the black, red and gold flag, produced a number of ideas and idealistic resolutions but little way of practical results. A diplomacy of dynastic intrigues played one ruler, one count against the other, and when a simultaneous revolution in the originally German Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein against Denmark inflamed the latent patriotism of the 600 deputies, it knew how to turn the situation to its own advantage.

When the revolution settled down, effecting some constitutional alterations in the liberal direction, the parliament and people were divided into two camps: advocates of a Greater Germany embracing

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Austria, who thereby, on historical as well as political, religious and other grounds, supported the claim of the Emperor at Vienna to the leadership and the crown of a future unified Germany, and those of Little Germany, who wished to exclude Austria as merely the German overlord of an otherwise foreign nation, and accepted Prussia as the dominant power entitled to the crown. The latter view prevailed. The German crown was offered to Frederick William IV, who refused it because he did not wish to accept it from the hands of revolutionaries. The Frankfort parliament had included all the best and most cultured men of the country, a majority of professors, judges, lawyers, and not a few nobles. It died an inglorious death after some effort to resist by changing its abode—and with it disappeared the Pan-German *Bund*.

## IX

1848-1918

### BISMARCK'S EMPIRE

WHILE a new Germany was trying in vain to find herself under the guidance of her intellectual bourgeoisie, Prussianism in its old and approved form had acquired a new and, as subsequent events proved, its greatest leader. A thoroughbred 'Junker' from the Marches, Otto von Bismarck had begun his career in civil administration and soon attracted attention by a masterful way of settling disputes and going to the root of a question. After the failure of the German Confederation, Austria, under the young Emperor Francis Joseph and Prince Schwarzenberg stood in Metternich's place and successfully asserted her predominance in Germany, forcing Prussia by the Olmütz Convention to become a member of a League of north-German states; and the old Prussia-Saxony-Hohenzollern rivalry seemed to have ended in favour of the Imperial house. The 'Prussian Germanic State' of which the reformed Frederick William IV of Prussia had dreamed was dashed when confronted with the harsh realities of power politics. The still unsolved Sch

Holstein problem was the pretext under which Prusso-Austrian antagonism materialised, Russia backing Austria with her strong support. When the Crimean War broke out, Bismarck's advice to the Prussian government to keep out of the conflict prevailed over that of older statesmen.

During the years that followed Bismarck saw diplomatic service in many capitals before he was called, in 1862, to take the helm of the Prussian State. He had seen a pseudo-democracy at work—Prussia's envoy to the Frankfort Diet—and he had been her diplomatic representative at St. Petersburg and Paris. He enjoyed the personal esteem and friendship of William, who acted as regent for his brother Frederick William, when he finally became king and after his death in 1861 succeeded him as king. William was a soldier of good appearance, hard working and thrifty, a characteristic specimen of 'first servant of the state,' as Frederick the Great had described the ruler of Prussia. Actually, William rather followed the example of Frederick's father, the soldier king, and applied all his energies to perfecting and increasing his army. That army was doubled in numbers in 1856 and the following years under the care of the energetic Minister of War, General von Roon, who in turn urged William to make Bismarck his Prime Minister. In 1862, after a conflict between the crown and the Prussian Diet, which refused new credits for

resources, Roon's advice was followed, and the necessary funds, on Bismarck's advice, were raised by royal decree. Shortly before his appointment, during a visit he paid to London as Prussian Minister to Paris at the time of the exhibition of 1862, Bismarck had openly told Disraeli that he would use the first convenient pretext to declare war on Austria, break up the German Confederation, subjugate the smaller states of Germany and create a new Reich under Prussian domination. As soon as he was in power he started to prepare the way by improving relations with Russia, to which end he prevented the Prussian Poles from lending a hand to their insurgent brothers under Russian rule, and in going to war with Denmark—in company with Austria who was afraid to leave the initiative to Russia in a question of pan-German importance. The subsequent wrangling over a condominium in the conquered provinces which Bismarck had, from the beginning, decided to incorporate furnished the excuse for a definite rupture with Austria and in the spring of 1866 a Prussian victory effected the reform of the *Bund*, excluding Austria. The proposal of a German Army and Navy led by Bismarck precipitated the war. In less than six weeks the first Prussian *Bund* was won. In appearance it started as a dispute caused by the Confederation against its recalcitrant member Prussia, and the western and

southern German peoples fought on Austria's side Hanover even winning the first small skirmish. In reality it was a match between the upstart power of Prussia and the 'legitimate' claims of the House of Habsburg, which match was decided at Königgrätz or Sadowa, on 3 July, 1866. Bismarck forced the king and his military advisers to extreme moderation in their terms of peace, knowing well that a prolonged war would have meant intervention by foreign powers, most likely by Napoleon III who was striving hard for a decisive rôle in the European concert. Austria accepted her defeat, as she was simultaneously engaged in Italy—allied with Prussia—and after the sanguinary battles of Magenta and Solferino in 1859 felt unable to resist two rapidly growing adversaries in the north and the south. Thus Prussia was left a free hand to do with as many as she liked. She did: the Kingdom of Hanover and the Electorate of Hesse were surrendered; so were the Free City of Frankfurt, the old Reich's coronation town, and Schleswig-Holstein. A new North-German *Bund*, the forerunner of a new Prusso-German Empire, was established with the King of Prussia as hereditary President. The other member-states were bound to place their troops at the disposal of Prussia: the union which Bismarck fought was already virtually achieved. The superiority of the Prussian army, especially the quick-firing 'needle-gun,' had been

plished what the Great Elector's standing army, Frederick's drill and strategy, and Scharnhorst's compulsory military service had prepared through two centuries.

Prussian domination was not received with enthusiasm. Though some of the smaller sovereigns tried to compromise and to convince themselves of the necessity for making sacrifices for the sake of a greater and united Germany, large parts of the population, especially in the Catholic areas, adhered to the old order and resented the harsher forms of Prussian administration, the strict obedience demanded from them. They disliked the overbearing attitude of many Prussian officials, the privileges of the agrarian nobility, the 'Junkers,' and the stiff *esprit de corps* of the army officers, a tradition created by the sergeant-king Frederick William to let their poor pay. But Bismarck's far-sighted and ambitious policy caused events to march much more rapidly to permit of interference from such external reactions. After four years of consolidation during which a beginning was made with building a navy—the first one, created by the German Confederation, had been ignominiously sold by auction in the breakdown of 1848—and the Hohenzollern prestige was enhanced by visits of the Crown Prince to Jerusalem and to the inauguration of the Suez Canal, Bismarck's second great blow fell. The pretext was insignificant: Napoleon III's



objection to a Hohenzollern of the southern, Catholic line accepting the Spanish throne offered to him, cleverly engineered affront in which King William and the French Ambassador were the unknown puppets—and Napoleon let himself be manoeuvred into declaring war on Prussia, the very war for which Bismarck, Roon, the War Minister, and Count Moltke, the Chief of Staff, were longing.

The Franco-German war of 1870 started in July. Between the first skirmish on 2 August and the decisive German victory at Sedan on 1 September only one month elapsed. Napoleon III himself with his army surrendered; a French Republic under Gambetta's energetic leadership continued the struggle, but not three weeks after Sedan Paris was besieged. On 27 October the main fortress, Metz, fell, and on 28 January, 1871, Paris surrendered after terrible sufferings and Communist revolts. In the ensuing Treaty of Frankfurt the new Imperial Germany gained Alsace and Eastern Lorraine, Metz and Strassburg and an indemnity of five milliards of francs (£200,000,000) in cash. Bismarck, a master of stagecraft, chose the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles in which to have the Imperial crown placed on the head of his king and puppet. On 18 January, 1871, on the apparently spontaneous initiative of all the other German kings and ruling princes, after he had won them over in advance by persuasion, bribes or threats. A few of them

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#### BISMARCK'S EMPIRE

the romantic, and subsequently insane, Ludwig of Bavaria and William's close relative, the Grand Duke of Baden, were sincerely convinced of the rightness of the cause Bismarck had urged upon them.

Events seemed to justify them at first. The patriotic enthusiasm created by the great victory over what had previously been considered the first military power in Europe, the sudden wealth that came to large parts of the population from the stream of gold which the French indemnity brought to a formerly modest and thrifty people, the economic impetus thereby gained—all contributed to make the Prusso-German Empire appear as a boon to the whole German race. German historians like Mommsen, Lamprecht and especially Treitschke made their work a means of exalting German, and particular Prussian, nationalism and imperialism by proving their absolute value. Being as yet interested in colonial expansion, Bismarck astutely checked French activity towards that field, so as to provide a safe outlet for a strong nationalism that might otherwise have concentrated upon revenge. At the same time, haunted by his *cauchemar des nations*, he succeeded in reviving to some extent the old Holy Alliance by a 'Covenant of the Three Emperors' concluded in 1872 between the Russian Emperor, Francis Joseph and the German Emperor; when Russia was temporarily estranged by

Bismarck's attitude at the Berlin Congress of 1878—the apex of his career as the leading statesman of Europe—he converted the Covenant into an Austro-German one and, three years later, into the Triple Alliance by the addition of Italy.

Although they had gained a wider field of vision from the Chancellor's international game, the majority of the Germans of that period still held comparatively parochial views. The Berliners were still wont to speak of their king, and not of the Emperor; the southern and western German states, and especially their parliaments as they grew in influence, displayed a strong particularism and fought tenaciously for their 'privileges,' which consisted of separate military contingents, in some cases their own bank-notes and postage-stamps, their independent railway-systems and above all their management of their schools, church affairs, taxes and so forth. Technically the new Hohenzollern monarchy was a confederation of the princes and three free cities of Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck which had republican constitutions. It needed a strong current of general European industrialism to draw a people so preoccupied with its domestic affairs into the whirlpool of international politics and make it accept the risks and sacrifices of that new rôle. A boom in science and invention, great engineering feats, and a successful general development of German industry which soon

to compete seriously with Britain in the sphere of world trade, helped to foster the spirit of enterprise. Setbacks like the great crash of 1873, due to unscrupulous and haphazard speculation which had been favoured for a time by the regular influx of French indemnity-payments, held up that development only for a time; and the British Trade Mark Act, designed to stop competition from cheaper and inferior German imitations of British goods by insisting on their being marked 'Made in Germany,' soon proved an advantage to the astute and ingenious Germans. With the development of great German shipping companies, especially the Hamburg-America Line under Albert Ballin, and the growth of the German Navy—an increase in the necessity of protecting the country's overseas interests—friction between Britain and the new Empire, which had hitherto been on comparatively friendly terms, slowly but unavoidably began to develop.

The proud and patrician Free City of Hamburg was the spearhead of this German advance. From there the first German colonial pioneers had started into the South Seas as far back as 1844 and later to Northern Africa and Morocco. In 1884 even Prussia, who had been reluctant to embark on colonial adventures, was likely to collide with British and French interests, finally had to give way to that half economic, half political demand for a share of the world.

world's unexploited riches. He granted protection to private ventures in South-West Africa, East Africa, the Cameroons and New Guinea, and thereby laid the foundation of a German colonial empire. Considerations of home politics may have influenced his decision to divert the interest of a large part of the population to new, foreign, and somewhat adventurous and romantic enterprise. He had not been successful in his struggle against the Catholic Church, which began in 1872 and lasted until 1887 the so-called *Kulturkampf*, in spite of having started it with such drastic measures as expelling Jesuits, placing the clergy under state control, restricting the church's influence upon education, making civil marriage compulsory and dissolving monasteries. This campaign, by which he hoped to crush both pro-Habsburg leanings among the Catholic population of the new, western provinces of Prussia and the Christian socialism advocated by some bishops, lost him many sympathies in Bavaria and other southern states and failed to make headway against the strong and ancient conservative Catholic Party, the 'Centre.'

He was more successful in taming the Socialists whose official Social-Democratic party, founded in 1875, soon gave up its most radical revolutionary theories, its Reformist and Revisionist wing, leaving the doctrinaires. Even so, Bismarck took several Anarchist attempts to assassinate

old Emperor as a pretext for promulgating drastic anti-Socialist laws, which were mitigated soon afterwards by the grant of the first of a series of so-called social insurances, the old-age insurance of 1881. The years round 1880 mark the zenith of Bismarck's almost unlimited power. He enjoyed the full confidence of his aged master and played skilfully on a parliament which had a merely advisory, not controlling, influence on policy, being unable to overthrow a Cabinet appointed and dismissed by the Emperor. He had, moreover, acquired such international prestige as often made him arbiter of peace. His most brilliant performance was the settlement of the eternal Eastern question after the Russo-Turkish war of 1878 at the Congress of Berlin, which brought together the leading statesmen of all the great and some of the secondary powers for his chairmanship and established the independence of Roumania, Bulgaria and Serbia, besides many other alterations of the map. Although Austria's ambitions were frustrated, largely through the agency of Disraeli, Bismarck succeeded in regaining the confidence of St. Petersburg and concluded a 'Re-insurance treaty' with Russia which he regarded as a necessary, although seemingly contradictory, supplement to the Triple Alliance. That treaty was signed in 1884; in 1888 William I died at the age of ninety-one; his son and successor Frederick III, Queen Victoria's son-in-law, followed

him only three months later, taking with him all hopes of a more liberal era; and William II ascended the throne.

He was twenty-nine years of age, gifted and head strong, and he hated the idea of having to submit his plans and decisions to the approval of an old man of world-wide reputation and immense national prestige. He therefore 'dropped the pilot' at the first opportunity, over a dispute of procedure, in 1890. He set out to gain popularity by instituting further social insurances, against sickness and disablement, and to enlarge his international prestige by increasing and fostering the army and navy. Although he preserved peace for more than a quarter of a century, his decided militarist leanings, his favouritism, which produced a *camarilla* that flattered him and screened him from the realities of life, his frequent and violent speeches, his love of military splendour and of display in general, and his frequent journeys at home and abroad made him responsible for most of the political unrest of the period preceding the Great War of 1914-18. He could not refrain from interfering in other people's affairs, witness his behaviour over the Boer war, the Boxer revolt in China shortly afterwards, the Agadir incident of 1908, and many other instances. As Bismarck had his *cauchemar des coalitions*, William was haunted by the nightmare of many's 'encirclement' which was supposed

engineered by none other than his uncle the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. He was never popular, except with his toadies of the princely and Junker class and a few scientists, scholars and financial and industrial magnates whom he personally liked.

His period, as regards both himself and the German people as a whole, was one of very real success fatally marred by its love for the showy. Everything had to be 'colossal': public buildings, the size of a canvas, a scientific theory, a military display, the speed of a new train, the production of a new machine. Architectural taste can hardly ever have been guilty of such strange aberrations, in which pseudo-Renaissance and pseudo-Gothic vied

with *Jugendstil*, a fearsome conglomeration of distorted ornamentation originated by a Munich school of designers. The Emperor always went out in brilliant uniform and wore an upturned, painted moustache that was a gift to the caricaturists. He was an able dilettante in many fields but could not endure to be excelled by others and permitted himself to be praised as a master in every one of them. Like a God-Cæsar of old, he wanted servants and advisers, believing sincerely in a divine grace bestowed upon him with the crown. Scarcely one of his Ministers dared to put him in his place; Bernhard von Bülow, whom he had made first a Count and then a Prince, as his grandfather did to Bismarck, tried it once but failed, and lost the long-



continued favour that he had won as Foreign Minister and afterwards as Chancellor by flattery and pliancy and an astute exploitation of his master's weaknesses.

Many were the blunders that paved the way to disaster. Alsace and Lorraine, the provinces that might have been really won back for Germany had the particular situation and the character of the population been properly considered, were left to the administration of harsh and overbearing Prussian officials and soldiers who provoked frequent and sometimes serious clashes. Britain was estranged by a senseless, because sterile, competition in the naval field; Japan by William's intervention in the war with China in 1895, which led to the Peace of Shimonoseki, and by a drawing in which the Emperor showed the European powers ranged against the rising 'Yellow Peril'; China by excluding from her, in 1897, the colony of Kiaochow. He prevented the lasting amicable settlement with France he sincerely desired by repeated interference in Morocco and by a military effort that forced the French Republic, more and more outdistanced in numbers by the higher German birth-rate, to ever increasing sacrifices.

The clash, for one reason or another, had become practically inevitable by the time it happened in 1914. Although neither William nor the majority of his prosperous people wished it, there was a strong group of extreme nationalists, the Pr

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German League, that had become powerful under the regime and openly advocated a career of conquest with the aim of world-domination, if necessary shared with Britain and the U.S.A. but securing the better part of the European Continent for the 'superior race' of the Germans. Together with other organisations, like the Navy League, the Colonial League and similar bodies, the Pan-Germans represented that tradition of Prussianism which for well over two hundred years had thriven on conquest and the mental as well as physical regimentation of the whole nation. True, they encountered strong opposition from the liberal and democratic groups as well as from the rapidly growing socialist movement, which in the last election before the Great War won 111 seats in the Reichstag, presenting nearly 30 per cent. of the electorate. But at the decisive hour that opposition disappeared as if by magic, the whole German people having been made to believe that the war had been brought about by a Franco-Russian plot to destroy their thriving Empire, with the backing of Britain who wanted to get rid of an ever more dangerous economic rival. The course of the war showed up both the qualities and the defects of the German people and its leaders. Initial success, due to a thorough preparation of the gigantic war machine, soon ceased. Far-reaching political and strategic plans were frustrated. enormous sacrifices were made by a finally half

starved population. Battles were won in France and in Russia, countries like Belgium, Serbia and Roumania were swallowed. The U-Boat, the German submarine, proved a terrible weapon against the far superior British Navy; 'Big Bertha' a giant gun bombarding Paris from a distance of seventy-five miles, and the Zeppelins, raiding London and scattering their bombs on civilians, men, women and children alike, were expected to undermine the fighting spirit of the Entente countries. At the Dardanelles, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine German officers and special troops stiffened Turkey's badly-equipped armies after the Young Turks had been thrown in their lot with the Central Powers; derring-do pirate ships and air aces like Baron Richthofen and Captain Boelcke won admiration even from their adversaries. Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, the 'wooden Titan' behind whom the strategic genius of General Ludendorff pulled the wires, annihilated large Russian armies and penetrated deep into the territory of a weak and superstitious Tsar. Austria, on whose behalf the great holocaust had started, wrestled with her great neighbours Russia and Italy without, and with ever-increasing disaffection within, as the demand of her Slavonic and other non-German peoples for independence grew more and more insistent. Francis Joseph's prestige prevailed until his death in 1916, when a young, well-meaning grand-nephew, Charles, took

ironed the original heir to which, Crown Prince Rudolf, had perished mysteriously in connection with a love-affair, while his successor, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, had been murdered by a Serbian fanatic on the eve of the war.

The whole structure of the Central bloc, including Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Turkey and—after some hesitation—Bulgaria, proved ramshackle and unreliable, though capable of well-prepared and violent onslaughts which again and again, including the last great offensive in the spring of 1918 in France, threatened the Allied front with a fatal break-through. The tenacity and later resources of the Allies, greatly strengthened during the last year of the war by the entry of the U.S.A. into the struggle on their side, won through in four years and five months of fighting; Wilhelm II, on the advice of his generals, took refuge in Holland and abdicated when a revolt, starting in his capital but rapidly spreading all over the country, began to overthrow the regime.

The civil powers, who at an early stage of the war had given way to a purely military dictatorship, proved unable to stem the tide at practically any moment of the period. Bülow's successor, Theodor von Bethmann Hollweg, a slow-moving, cultured man, was overwhelmed by scruples which he openly confessed when the Treaty of 1839 guaranteeing Belgium's neutrality and inviolability was treated as

a 'Scrap of Paper.' Overthrown by the Supreme Command, he was succeeded by a series of nonentities, until finally, shortly before the breakdown, a first parliamentary Cabinet, including Socialists was formed by Prince Max of Baden, a member of the most liberal of the ruling German dynasties. But after enforcing abdication upon the Hohenzollerns, this Cabinet too found itself unable to resist a revolution which, unlike all previous revolutions in history, was brought about by underground forces, by general hunger and despair, against the will of those to whom it was to bring the power to fulfil their age-old dream. For the Socialist party the strongest in Parliament in spite of the secession of some minor, more radical groups, was neither willing nor ready to take the lead and to conclude an armistice the conditions of which were optimistic and expected to be based upon the 'Fourteen Points'.

Much had already been made of this programme launched the year before by the American President Woodrow Wilson. Not that a victorious German government would have given it any consideration whatsoever: but to a defeated Germany on the brink of disaster these points appeared as a shining anchor, and when her plenipotentiaries, a Catholic leader, Dr. Erzberger, and General von Winterfeldt met Marshal Foch, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, in the wood of Compiègne, on November, 1918, they were bitterly disappointed.

to be presented with much harsher conditions.

They had to give way, however, not because the power of German resistance was undermined by revolutionary activities, by the famous 'Stab in the Back' of which German nationalists have made so much ever since, but because Turkey, Bulgaria and, immediately before the armistice, Austria-Hungary had utterly broken down, surrendered and disintegrated, and because the two last tremendous attacks on the western front, in March and July 1918, had exhausted every ounce of strength the army and the country still possessed after four years of blockade, after the loss of two million dead and the using up of war material down to the last tyre and the last strap. On November 11 the Armistice was signed in Foch's special train, and a whole people, awakening from a nightmarish dream, found itself confronted with the drab and dreary reality of a new epoch in its life.

Borrowing its first somewhat shabby dress from Russia, which had gone Bolshevik a year before, the new German Republic was at first ruled by a Council of People's Commissioners, composed of Socialists and Independent Socialists—who had opposed the war budgets—and by Workmen's and Soldiers' councils formed haphazard everywhere. That government, in which the names of Ebert and Scheidemann soon predominated, had to endorse the harsh conditions of the Armistice.

## X

1918-33

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE GERMAN REPUBLIC

GREATNESS and dignity in disaster are the sure proofs of a people's quality. The best friends of the Germans cannot claim that these traits manifested themselves in post-war Germany. It was the famous *querelles Allemandes* again and again, over technicalities, over obsolete privileges and traditions, over titles and ranks, over the colours of the uniform, over working hours, wages and holidays, over the procedure to settle strikes, and over the rôle of the 'Councils' in public and economic life. Even the orderly and disciplined spirit of a people drilled by its sergeants for three centuries succeeded in asserting itself to some extent. After a first fierce revolt of the pupils of Moscow, the 'Spartan' Party led by idealistic fanatics like Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and a great deal of bloodshed and destruction in street-fights between armed Communists and regular and irregular troops has collected for the defence of the as yet half-baked republic, a regular election in January 1919 created legitimate authorities, a Scheidemann Cabinet.

pointed by the first President of the German Republic, Friedrich Ebert, and a National Assembly charged with the task of elaborating a republican constitution. Weimar, the town of Goethe and Schiller, was chosen as temporary capital, and much back-stairs intrigue as well as much sincere idealism was displayed in the National Theatre of the Thuringian capital.

The *genius loci* could not prevail against pedantry and doctrinairism. An electoral system was created which gave equal rights to men and women and permitted anybody able to collect 500 signatures to start a party and to have himself and his followers presented as candidates at the expense of the state. Proportional representation destroyed any chance of forming workable majorities. The Constitution, while aiming at a maximum of justice, contained crevices and loopholes that were to prove disastrous hereafter. Efforts to damp down misguided revolutionary excitement and harness its energies for the benefit of reconstruction within the limits of severely limited frontiers and reduced means, were again and again frustrated, either by hot-heads of the extreme left or by reactionary free corps leaders of the extreme right. The terms of the armistice and afterwards of the Treaty of Versailles (reluctantly signed by Germany after her plenipotentiary, Count Brockdorf-Rantzau, had first refused to do so), which took effect as from 10 January, 1920, took



heavy toll of an already weakened and impoverished economy. Under the heading of Reparations coal, chemicals and timber had to be delivered in gigantic quantities, cattle to be restored and gold payment to be made which, although nothing like sufficient to cover the damage done to German-occupied territories during the war, soon confronted the republican treasury with complete bankruptcy.

The result of these payments in cash and in kind together with the unreasonable demands of shortsighted doctrinaires who thought it was the dawn of a new social era, hastened on an inflation begun during the last years of the war. Following the Russian and Austrian example, but soon outdistancing them, the printing-press of the German Reichsbank turned out first millions, then milliards, finally billions, which retained their nominal value and their purchasing-power for a shorter and shorter time, until in the end wages had to be paid daily and converted into goods at once, for fear that the day they would buy only half the quantity, and the whole of economic life became one mad whirl of astronomical figures. Extremely unpleasant phenomena showed themselves: the profiteer hoarded goods, bought property and shares for nothing with smuggled dollars, contracted debts and repaid them with money devalued to a fraction of the nominal amount; the corrupt official and his deputy; the illegal bucket-shop, money-exchange

and trade in precious metals. The hoarding or usurious 'black' selling of foodstuffs and other goods, the exploitation of a complete confusion in prices by foreign speculators, the progressive failure of rapidly changing governments and parliamentary majorities to re-establish some degree of order and justice all contributed to a mad dance that reached its peak when France, under the impression of bad faith on the German side in carrying out the Reparations clauses of the Treaty, and desiring to offset what inter-Allied negotiations had done to preserve the Rhineland for Germany, invaded the Ruhr valley, the industrial heart of Germany, in January 1923.

Nationalism, which had been forced into the background by the new social experiments and the general reaction against militarism, once more became rampant during the regime of French bayonets in the most important part of Germany. During the previous three or four years it had been thriving underground, only showing its hand in a number of times. Haase, a leader of the Independent Socialists, Eisner, the head of a left-wing Socialist Bavarian government, Erzberger, who had signed the Armistice and been Minister of Finance, and Dr. Walther Rathenau, a wealthy Jewish intellectual and successfully Minister for Reparations and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who tried to bring about a *modus vivendi* with France, were assassinated by young fanatics. In March 1920 the attempt of a group

of nationalists backed by the 'black,' i.e., official non-existent, forces of the Reichswehr to overthrow the republican government and replace it by the dictatorship of a high provincial official, Dr. Kapp, was frustrated by the concerted action of the trade unions and the democratic parties. Nationalism secured or helped to secure favourable results during the different plebiscites prescribed by the Versailles Treaty, but it deprived Germany of the then precious asset of foreign belief in her fundamental conversion. It found adherents everywhere during Poincaré's blunder in the Ruhr, which destroyed the country's last remaining economic resources.

The result was the formation, at a moment of deepest despair, of a 'national' government—including only the German Nationalists (who were Monarchists) and the different and as yet unimportant fractions of National-Socialism and Communism—under Dr. Gustav Stresemann, leader of the liberal Populist Party, on 13 August, 1923. This government concluded a temporary arrangement with France, put an end to the inflation at the cost of drastic sacrifices all round, suppressed Communist revolts in many parts of the country and a first Nationalist *Putzsch* which started on 9 November in Munich and generally, though with many setbacks and disappointments, consolidated the position of German Credits, mainly from the U.S.A. and mostly at exorbitant rates of interest, began to fertilise trade and

industry and a boom set in that was later to prove fictitious. Stresemann, confronted with Socialist opposition, was compelled to hand over the Chancellorship to representatives of the Socialist and the Catholic Party alternately, and confined himself to foreign affairs. In that field, in collaboration with the great French statesman Aristide Briand and with the far-sighted help of Sir Austen Chamberlain, he won deserved international fame as the first German European. The Locarno Pact of 16 October, 1925, a reciprocal guarantee of their Rhenish frontiers by all countries participating in that river, backed by Britain and Italy, together with arbitration treaties between Germany and her eastern neighbours Poland and Czechoslovakia, was the first-fruit of that co-operation which lasted until Stresemann's premature death on 3 October, 1929.

Germany's entry into the League of Nations in 1927 gave increased authority to that institution, a somewhat perverted result of Wilson's dream of perpetual peace, and proved the culminating point of a period in which a whole series of international conferences and treaties sought to get rid of narrow nationalism, obtain security for minorities and promote international trade and co-operation in a Europe which was being welded into an ever increasing unity. German nationalism, which was slipping further and further into the anti-Semitic, dictatorial doctrines of Adolf Hitler's National

Socialist Party, while the German Nationalists, the old Conservatives, completely lost their bearings, fought that international development tooth and nail. It might, nevertheless, have been overcome, in spite of the proneness of the German masses, and especially the lower middle class, to fall for sonorous loudly shouted slogans, had not the international economic crisis of 1931, which forced the U.S.A. to recall their lavishly granted loans, hit Germany's weak economic body with a deadly blow.

The number of the unemployed began to rise rapidly. From hundreds of thousands their figure soon rose to millions, banks and important industrial enterprises crashed, taxes had to be increased, wages and salaries to be cut, and in 1932 the 'democracy' established by the Constitution had to be paid for by more than six million working people, many of whom, especially in the youngest generation, never had a job in their lives. Dr. Heinrich Brüning, a Chancellor of the Catholic Party enjoying at a time the particular confidence of old Marshal von Hindenburg—who had been elected President after Ebert's death in 1925—did his utmost to stave off the disaster, making deep inroads into democratic rights with presidential decrees. He was bound to fail against the intrigues of the Nationalists who finally replaced him by two of their wire-pullers, Franz von Papen and General von Schleicher, and set up a purely dictatorial government, overthrowing

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the leftist Prussian Cabinet which had in some degree counterbalanced the nationalist trend in the Reich. Papen and Schleicher, while they intrigued against each other and supplanted each other, both tried to compromise with Hitler, who had meanwhile become leader of the strongest Party in the country among thirty-eight greater or smaller groups, and they thus paved the way for his triumph.

At the presidential election of spring 1932 he had been defeated by the old Marshal, who profoundly disliked and distrusted the 'Bohemian lance-corporal.' But on 30 January, 1933, when all other combinations had failed, he gave in and appointed Hitler Chancellor of the Reich. The idea was that he should head a coalition in which the former conservatives, Hindenburg's own Junker friends, and the Catholic Centre, aided perhaps by the remains of the Populist and other middle groups, would keep Nazi extremism under control while Franz von Papen, who enjoyed the President's particular friendship and esteem, as Vice-Chancellor and Prime Minister of Prussia, pulled the wires. Things turned out very differently, and the nailed boots of the massed Brownshirts which resounded on the pavement of the Wilhelmstrasse on the evening of that memorable day, when they staged a torch-light procession in honour of Hindenburg and Hitler together, beat the time to a new Dance of Death for European and Christian civilisation.

## XI

1933-?

### THE WHEEL COMES FULL CIRCLE: SAVAGES VERSUS CIVILISATION

THE German people accepted its new rulers with mixed feelings. The masses of destitute, unemployed working men and women, ruined shopkeepers, dismissed professional soldiers, stranded politicians and all the more sinister elements in a nation whose moral character had been seriously affected by two decades of war, inflation, dismemberment and loss of colonies and foreign property furiously acclaimed a new leadership and new principles that seemed to promise them revenge and the upper hand. The weakness and defeat (often undeserved) of the Republic added to the a great number who had neither time nor political training enough to hold any genuine democratic convictions but were mere political driftwood always ready to throw in their lot with the winner. The Monarchists saw in this 'national' movement a forerunner of a restoration, and good Christians and liberals took its furiously anti-Bolshevik and religious assertions at their face value. The Jews and 'non-Aryans'—a new classification for the

offspring of gentile-Jewish marriages—were filled with misgivings, while the Socialists and Communists, grown more numerous with the progressive radicalisation of the whole people by the propaganda and the cudgels of the Nazis, were openly antagonistic.

But Hitler, after having sworn the oath upon the constitution, made short work of adversaries and lies alike. Engineering, or at least taking advantage of, an attempt to burn down the Reichstag, the German Parliament-house, he set at nought the verdict of a general election, abolished the Communist Party and put Communists, Socialists and their potential adversaries into his concentration camps, whence many of them never escaped alive, and if they did, emerged as mental and physical wrecks who could tell no tales.

Having thus assumed full power, Hitler sprang the surprise after the other upon the world. In October 1933 he announced at Geneva Germany's withdrawal from a Disarmament Conference that had dragged on, with no sincerity or driving force behind it, for years without any practical results, and simultaneously served notice on the League of Nations. When Poland, ready to intervene, was rebuffed by France, he concluded a non-aggression pact with her in spring 1934 and started his campaign for Danzig, the Free City at the mouth of the Vistula, set up by the Treaty of Versailles to supplement the small 'corridor' that had been ceded to



Poland. Fortified by these successes against the Allies, who were unwilling to take risks in checking an obviously and deliberately aggressive, militarist nationalism which stood self-revealed in Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, with one fell swoop he annihilated whatever opposition he felt or foresaw at home within and without his own all-powerful Party, by the blood-bath of 30 June, 1934. Many of his most faithful comrades and lieutenants perished in front of his firing squads, amongst them the founder and leader of his Black- and Brownshirt army, Captain Röhm, together with his predecessor, General von Schleicher and his wife, and hundreds perhaps thousands, of victims who had incurred suspicion or personal hostility of the Führer, or Goering, Himmler, Goebbels or others of his inner circle. No legal procedure was gone through, judgment delivered, and no public account was given of that mass-murder or of the many that were to follow in a less spectacular form; Hitler himself only confessed, before his docile appointed—elected—Reichstag, to some seventy 'executions' for which he took personal responsibility.

In spite of this he easily won the Saar plebiscite provided-for by the Peace Treaty, in January 1935, and in March he repudiated the military clause of that treaty by re-establishing general conscription. The policy of toleration that France had started, practically preventing anti-Nazi activity in

Saar basin was carried a step further by Britain's conclusion of a Naval Treaty with Hitler which abolished the naval clauses of Versailles and empowered him to build a navy with a strength of 5 per cent. of that of the British fleet.

In the meantime he had gone some way towards overcoming the antipathy shown by Mussolini for his 'cheap imitator' and improved his relations with Italian Fascism by materially backing its invasion of Abyssinia. In March 1936 he tore up the Locarno Pact, of which Italy had been a signatory and guarantor, by moving German troops into the militarised zone in the Rhineland, and shortly afterwards associated himself with Mussolini in actively supporting the Fascist revolution of General Franco in Spain; German tanks and aeroplanes fought side by side with Italian against republican fighters and international or Russian supporters. His mountain retreat near Berchtesgaden Hitler included an agreement with Italy providing for a common policy—what was later termed the 'Axis.' His claim to colonies—although criticised by Hitler himself as senseless for a country that needed *Lebensraum*, 'living-space,' along its own borders began to be exploited for its nuisance value, and each 'oppression' of the three million Sudeten Germans (who had never belonged to the German Empire) was systematically denounced as an intolerable outrage and a breach of the peace treaties.

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which Hitler had otherwise so cynically disregarded.

National Socialism, at first declared to be a matter of strictly domestic import, soon began to display remarkable activity abroad, not only bringing the numerous German organisations all over the world into line with the party doctrine and technique, but starting, financing and pushing kindred or affiliated organisations in such countries as Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Roumania, Brazil, the Scandinavian countries and finally even planting Fascist groups in brown, black, blue, yellow, silver and other shirt in the body politic of most of the Great Powers. In this way, and by a necessarily increasing restriction of individual enterprise within Germany, where whole life was devoted to rearmament, National Socialism lost such features as had seemingly distinguished it at first from Bolshevism of the Moscow brand. By wiping out hundreds of thousands of 'superfluous' artisans and small traders and forcing them into factories, more and more of which were owned by the government or its uncontrolled equivalent, the Party, and by militarising the people beginning with the children in their earliest years going on through their school-period and then enforced Labour-Service, and ending with their enlistment in the Army, Navy and Air-Force, the Nazis turned a nation of sixty-seven millions into one huge war machine.

#### SAVAGES VERSUS CIVILISATION

Among Hitler's lieutenants, Hermann Goering, dismissed Captain of the 1918 Air Force, whom he made a General and later Field-Marshal, seems the outstanding figure. He directs the Air Force and is dictator of the whole industrial and economic life of the country. Dr. Joseph Goebbels tries as Minister of Propaganda to outdo Machiavelli in inscrupulously exploiting everybody and everything, true or false, for the benefit of the Nazi cause. Joachim von Ribbentrop, a former wine-merchant and a good linguist, advises the Führer on foreign politics and is responsible for some of his worst blunders, including the breach with Britain which Hitler, according to his Gospel, wanted to avoid at all costs. Heinrich Himmler is chief of the dreaded Gestapo, the secret police that rules over the life and death of every German and, without trial or appeal, inflicts penalties which range from rough handling, beating-up and torture in concentration camps to the firing squad and confiscation of property. Rudolf Hess is the personal A.D.C. of the dictator, his lieutenant in all Party matters and potential successor. There is a host of other leading figures among the camarilla around Hitler, for the whole Nazi system is built upon the 'leadership principle' giving supreme power over a larger or smaller body of men or sphere of activity to a single nominated, never elected, person. While apparently fixing responsibility, that system makes it

impossible to hold anybody in particular accountable for what happens: every appointed 'leader' has superior, and all of them depend on the supreme head of the State, the source of all legislation and initiative, the Dictator responsible only to himself.

Even responsibility before God is no more. For National Socialism has eliminated the spiritual influence of all the churches together with most of the rights and privileges of the clergy. While the practice of religion is still tolerated to a greater or less extent, according to the degree of subservience shown by the denomination in question, the racial creed of Hitlerism is essentially a tribal superstition mixed with remnants of the old Teutonic, heathen cult. Christianity is branded as oriental, non-Aryan, unheroic—as an essentially Jewish ethical system. All science—in so far as there are any qualified teachers left after the expulsion of all non-Nazi, 'tainted' scholars and teachers—is directed towards proving or strengthening the German claim to world-domination in virtue of innate Nordic Teutonic superiority. With that mentality ruling in the largest central-European country; with the Prussian military tradition, and the old Teutonic brutality deliberately reawakened; with the mysticism of a maniac who revels in the adulation, since or simulated, of a nation and consents to be addressed as the 'Jesus Christ of the Germans,' with the western Powers, misguided by his anti-Bolshevik

slogans and his freely given and as readily broken pledges of peace and friendship, looking impotently on—small wonder that Hitler only waited until his re-armament had reached a certain point to start on his career of conquest.

His first victim, on 12 March, 1938, was Austria. This Germanic republic, forbidden to join with Weimar Germany, had had a checkered career marked by ever-renewed financial difficulties, temporarily relieved by the League of Nations, and political strife between Socialists and equally strong Catholics. On 25 July, 1934, the shadow of National Socialism had fallen heavily upon Austria for the first time when her clerico-Fascist Chancellor, Dr. Dollfuss, was assassinated by Hitlerites and a *Putsch* engineered from Germany was prevented at the last minute by Mussolini's menacing attitude. Now Dollfuss's successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, who dared to reject an ultimatum by Hitler, was imprisoned without trial, pogroms were held and Socialists, Monarchists, Catholics and Jews were manhandled, killed, driven to suicide, interned in concentration camps or expatriated with the utmost ruthlessness after German troops had overwhelmed an unresisting country, seat of the oldest and most refined culture in the German-speaking world. But this was only a prelude to a whole series of military operations following each other with clockwork precision according to plans

which had mapped out the conquest of Europe and the world long before and which had been treated abroad as a chimera emanating from the brain of the Nazi high priest Alfred Rosenberg, a Balt who like Hitler, Hess, the agricultural leader Darré and many others, could not even claim to be a German in the proper sense of the word.

The next victim was Czechoslovakia, the prosperous, sincerely democratic republic protected by the Sudeten mountain range. Revolts by the Sudeten Germans, led by Hitler's deputy Konrad Henlein, were followed by sham negotiations about civil rights to be granted to them within the republic; then at Munich, on 30 September, 1938, by threats of war and after negotiations with the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and later with him, his French colleague Daladier and Mussolini together, Hitler obtained the cession of the whole German-speaking area. Finally, breaking the now defenceless country and tearing up the Munich agreement, he marched into the Slavonic parts, took Prague without a shot on 15 March 1939, and turned the country into a German Protectorate plus a small dependent Slovakian Republic, large parts of whose territory were ceded as a bribe to Hungary.

Poland was to follow in spite of the treaty of 1934. But this time the Western Powers were awake to the danger and when, on 1 September

In 1939, Hitler's motorised armies and air force, on a flimsy pretext, invaded Poland, they declared war in a belated attempt to fulfil the pledges they had given to the countries menaced by German aggression. Danzig, in practice long a Nazi domain, was one of the pretexts; the real reason was that Germany wanted Poland's vital artery, the Corridor. An agreement with Soviet Russia, Hitler's 'arch-enemy,' concluded between Ribbentrop and his Russian counterpart Molotov on 26 August, 1939, and sprung as a surprise upon the world, had made Germany safe from an attack in the east. The price he had to pay was enormous, for it included the abandonment of all plans for a 'living-space' in the fertile Ukraine, the withdrawal from the Baltic countries of everything the Germans had built up there since the days of the Teutonic Order and the Hansa, and the admission of Russian rights of interference in the Balkans. It included a new partition of Poland, completely routed when, after a fortnight's fierce fighting, Russian armies suddenly invaded her from the east. It included the occupation by Stalin of strategic positions in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and his subsequent annexation of those countries, and the faithless abandonment of Finland, the Nordic State which German armies had helped to create and to liberate from Russian domination, to a ruthless armed attack and a final mutilation.



Like the tribal chiefs of two thousand years ago, Hitler has but one interest : self-interest ; but one faith : in human stupidity and in the efficacy of lying, treachery and bluff, supplemented where necessary by brute force. As the new Great War shows, he has successfully trained the youth of his country for that task, efficiently set its whole gigantic industrial machinery to the same work, and astutely relied upon the unbelievable nature of his original claims to over-reach the old-fashioned statesmen of the surrounding world who cling to some sort of rules of the game. When, during Easter week in March 1940, he suddenly seized Denmark and invaded Norway with the help of traitors and spies, he had already given up all pretence. He had, if possible, still less of an excuse when he crashed through neutral Holland and Belgium two months later in order to defeat the defensive strategy of the French, which relied on the strength of the Maginot Line. He was successful, by dint of using methods of warfare of a ruthlessness without parallel in history : mowing down civilian fugitives, destroying whole towns and villages by aerial attacks on a vast scale, and using his tanks as well as parachutists and soldiers in every sort of disguise to destroy the morale of the hinterland, to play havoc with the system of communications and to cut off supplies.

After breaking through at the crucial point, the

end of the Maginot Line proper near Sedan, his armies overcame French resistance within a few weeks; on 14 June Paris surrendered. There are heroic pages even in the history of that disaster, one of the most brilliant being the British retreat from the bombed and shelled beach of Dunkirk on 18 June. The entry of Italy into the war at Hitler's side seems of small importance compared with the loss of most of France's fighting forces—though some, in a splendid spirit of sacrifice and pride, ranged themselves against their defeatist Pétain-Laval government on the British side. On this 1 September, 1940, one year after a megalomaniac apostle of brute force started the second Great War, Britain stands unshaken and is daily strengthening her forces and her morale; alone, yet backed by the ropes and prayers of downtrodden peoples, the champion of those ideals which the best men through the ages have upheld even at the cost of their lives, but for which the Nazis and their followers, having shed the thin veneer of civilisation given to their nation by their Goethes and Kants, their Beethovens and Mozarts, their Dürers and Holbeins, have nothing but contempt.